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THE
INDO-PAKISTANI WAR OF 1971

Volume 2

Showdown in the North-West

RAVI RIKHYE

Asia@War SERIES

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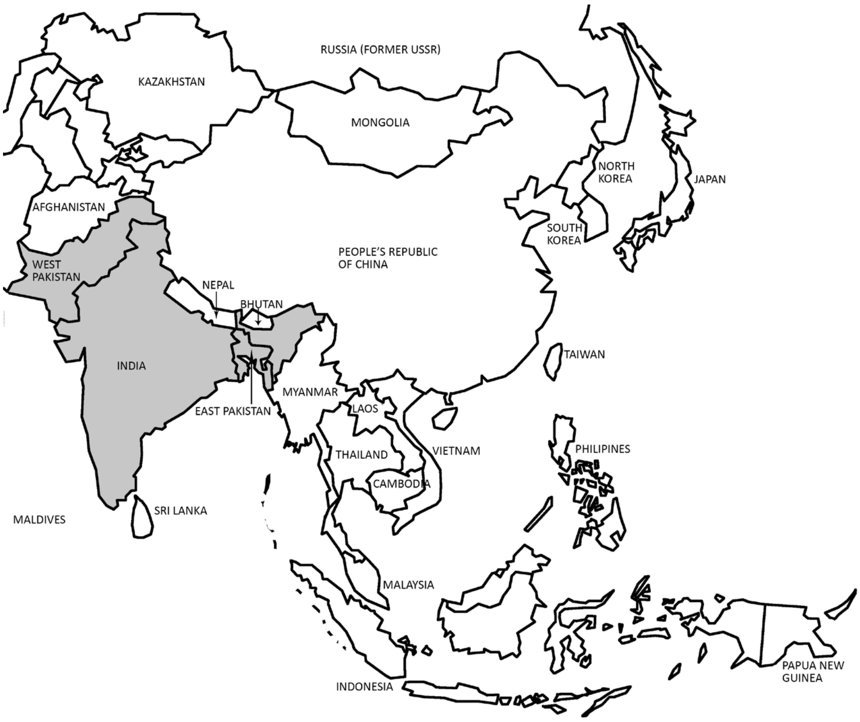
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Note: In order to simplify the use of this book, all names, locations and geographic designations are as provided in The Times World Atlas, or other traditionally accepted major sources of reference, as of the time of described events.

ABBREVIATIONS

AB	air base
AHQ	Army Headquarters (India)
AK	Azad Kashmir Regiment (Pakistan)
BSF	Border Security Force (India)
CO	commanding officer
DMI	Directorate of Military Intelligence (India)
FFR	Frontier Force Regiment (Pakistan Army)
GHQ	General Headquarters
GOC	General Officer Commanding
HQ	Headquarters
KIA	killed in action
MIA	missing in action
ORBAT	order of battle
OC	officer commanding
PRC	People's Republic of China (mainland China)
RAW	Research and Analysis Wing (top Indian foreign intelligence agency)
SSG	Special Service Group (special forces asset of the Pakistan Army)
USA	United States of America

AUTHOR'S NOTE ON WRITING HISTORY

Writing history is a subjective act. It is not possible to produce a wholly objective account because history is a science, but people's recollections start changing with 30 minutes of action. In the case of India and Pakistan, records are even less complete than usual the case in a war. No matter how hard the historian tries to be objective, her/his biases creep in. Inevitably, much of what a historian says is based on inference. This does mean that just because a historian's work is only partially true and tells a story with many different interpretations that we can – like some the post-modernists and post-truthists just give up either write nothing, or say 'my interpretation is as good as anyone else'. The conscientious historian does her/his best, relies on as many different accounts as possible – even if wholly contradictory – and is constantly reviewing her/his work in the light of new evidence.

The existence of bias is no excuse not to write history. Historians must try to avoid bias if possible and identify it when not possible. So here is my statement on my bias.

I was born in united India and lived there for 20 adult years. The 1947 Partition ripped apart the Punjab, destroying a multicultural society of Muslims, Hindi, and Sikhs. The feeling among Indian Punjabis of our Pakistani as 'our kind of people' remained strong. Now it is almost gone because of Pakistan's decision to maintain an endless low-level war against India.

Going strictly by facts, the 1971 War was started by India. This remains an unpopular thesis in India. I got away with it because I was regarded as a maverick, and the more uncharitable of my friends regarded me as a CIA agent and therefore capable of any atrocity. I was not important enough to have enemies. Today no one cares. In my day my first book was banned by Government of India simply for saying that. An acolyte of John Mearsheimer's school of strategic realism, I have never criticised India for doing what was only to its interest; my problem is that India, as always, left its job half done. India's belief that it was a victim of Pakistan aggression in 1971 is an example of India's magical thinking. Indians say: We only helped stop Pakistani repression of East Bengal, so we are innocent parties. Indian reasoning: Pakistan attacked us first in the west, so the blame for the war is entirely theirs. That you can attack one wing of a country and then say you didn't start the war is logic of which Indians are uniquely capable, but leaves others confused.

In the real world, we do need to know that Pakistan attacked India first in 1947–48, Kutch 1965, and the 1965 War. We also need to know that right from Independence in 1947, Pakistan tried to subvert north-east India. India had every justification to attack Pakistan in 1971 as matter of realism, though attacking was illegal under the US Charter.

But again, to be fair: India in 1948 was willing to give up its claims to Kashmir if Pakistan gave up its claim to Hyderabad. Arrogantly, Pakistani leaders rejected this compromise, arguing that they would win Kashmir anyway, so there was no need to compromise on Hyderabad. Pakistan did not win the Kashmir Valley, its core aim. Given the disparity in economic power, at that time 4-1 (defence Rs 230 crores vs Rs 970 crores),[1] the only way Pakistan can get Kashmir is by war, overt and covert. I do not blame Pakistan, though its 75-year quest has been futile and ruinous. For the same reason, I cannot blame India for going to war in 1971 because India thought this was a solution to the continuing 25-year-old conflict. If Pakistan could be divided in two it would no longer be a threat. This hope proved futile: with East Bengal gone, Pakistan became a single compact unit with a focused identity. India, with its historically tendency to stop a war halfway and convince itself it has won, did not attempt to subjugate West Pakistan. And East Pakistan, the new Bangladesh, greatly thrived economically. But the Bengalis with their perpetual fascination for conspiracy, built up their forces against India to 11 divisions from the single division in united Pakistan. Dhaka and India are by no means enemies, nor they aimable friends and partners. After all, India had no claims on Bangladesh and helped create it, but the sight of 11 divisions aimed at India cannot be comforting.

India militarily succeeded in its eastern campaign; it failed totally in the western campaign. Pakistan too made unnecessary mistakes, but at least it a managed a stalemate in the west. This needs to be said because it is the truth. Accordingly, this book straightens out the false Indian narrative of Indian winning a great victory in 1971. In the east yes; in the west the status quo was maintained. It is not biased against India, even as it condemns the Indian political and military leaderships for the western failure. Several Indian authors have by now said this. The tactically brilliant 1971 victory in East Pakistan has, through the last 50 years, gained India nothing geostrategically, compared to India's aims and hopes. The reality is a plain failure. It is akin to the British, French, and US in World War I: they won against Germany, but that victory proved ephemeral because they had to fight all over again 25-years later. They again won against Germany.

But with Germany destroyed as a leading military power, the west had to face the USSR for 45 years.[2]

Lastly, thank you, Tom, for your never-ending patience. Especially putting up with every Mary, Jane, and Sandra who in this internet age think they are defence experts. Myself, I spent 10 years studying before writing my first short paper.

INTRODUCTION

This second monograph in Helion's series on the 1971 India-Pakistan War explores the events that unfolded in Kashmir, Jammu (Chhamb), and the Shakargarh Bulge, situated along the contentious Line of Communication between Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir. Given the disputed nature of the territory, India and Pakistan were able to retain only modest gains from previous conflicts in Jammu and Kashmir, as India returned everything else for the sake of 'lasting peace'. Unfortunately, this was never achieved due to Pakistan's persistent assertion of claims over Jammu and Kashmir through insurgency.

Apart from chronicling the battles, this monograph provides an overview of the origins of the Kashmir problem and sheds light on the lack of strategic leadership exhibited by both India and Pakistan on the 'Western Front' during their largest-ever, conventional war. Furthermore, the narrative is enriched with fascinating factoids about the war, adding depth and context to the historical account.

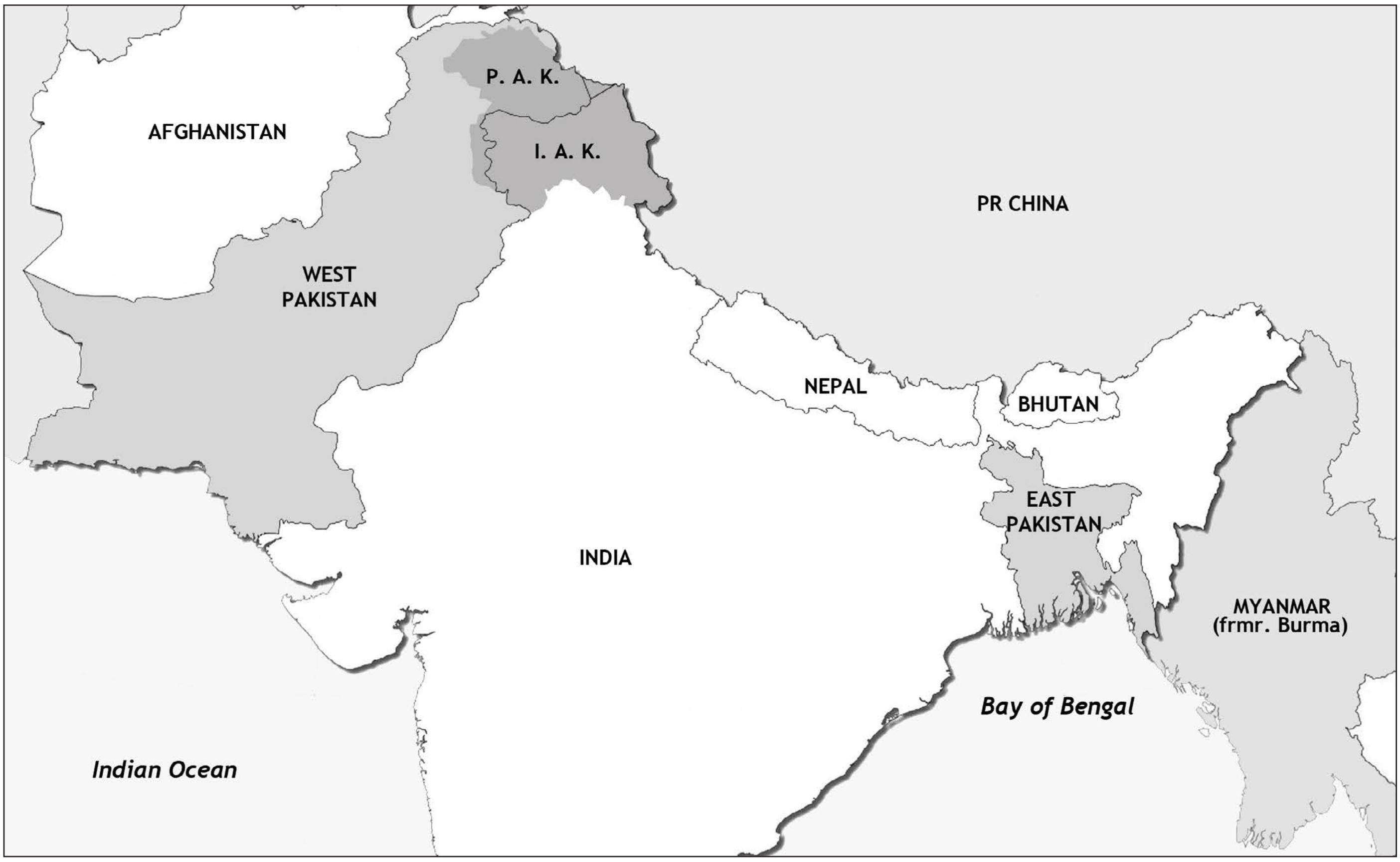
Kashmir: the Geopolitics

Kashmir was on its way to a hundred-year war when the first shots were fired in 1947. There were periods of relative calm, but Pakistan never gave up its efforts to take control of Kashmir, while India insisted on exclusive possession over the entire region. Pakistan's attempts persisted over the years, resulting in a vicious 25-year insurgency that continues at the time of writing.

India, on the other hand, showed reluctance to forcefully pursue its claim, partly due to China's occupation of approximately 40 percent of the state, with India choosing not to fight with China. The year 1971 presented the last significant opportunity, but India's performance was far from successful and critical mistakes were made.

Becoming involved in the rights or wrongs, especially on a partisan basis, appears to be a waste of time, as there was no definitive right or wrong in the Kashmir conflict. Each side staunchly held its perspective, leaving no room for compromise. Therefore, the following account should be viewed as a history of events, with no intention from the author to argue for any particular case.

Hindus have lived in Kashmir for thousands of years. In the fourteenth century, the Shah Mir dynasty forcefully established Islam in the region, possibly originating from Swat or Turkey via Swat. The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries saw the Mughals' dynasty but as their empire declined, Afghanis rose to power and governed Kashmir until their defeat by the Sikhs under Maharajah Ranjit Singh. The nineteenth century marked the arrival of British power, leading to the end of Sikh rule. The British sold Kashmir



This map shows northern and central India, East and West Pakistan and the border areas with the People's Republic of China. Kashmir is shown divided into the de facto Indian Administered Kashmir (IAK) and Pakistan Administered Kashmir (PAK). (Map by Tom Cooper) to the Dogras, but kept effective control, partly due to the Russian advances in Central Asia, which posed a threat to the British Indian empire.[1]

The Pakistani argument for control of Kashmir was that Muslim's had ruled for the past six centuries and they felt they represented the majority of the local population. Whereas the Indian argument stated the Muslims were violent invaders trying to convert the Hindus and that Kashmir willingly joined India under the terms set by the British for Partition.

Jammu, Kashmir, and Ladakh (popularly referred to as Kashmir), was, at 222,000km^2 the biggest of the 565 independent kingdoms in the British Indian empire. The ruler was Hari Singh, a Hindu Dogra. The Dogra rule was brutal and oppressive. Kashmir, however, regardless of the religion and ethnicity of the rulers, was an exploited region.[2] As an example of Dogra oppression, in 1931 a Srinagar paper estimated that a tenant farmer spent Rs 15 to farm a quarter acre of land, but earned only Rs 13 therefore, he could not pay additional taxes demanded in cash or earn a living; he had no rights to the land. On top of this, landlords imposed forced labour, often at the same time as the farmer needed to do his own harvesting. Additionally, periodic natural disasters, caused by the shifting of the Himalayan tectonic plate, afflicted the people. It is no surprise that farmers abandoned the land and migrated out of the state. Even after Independence in 1947, the incidence of corruption was very high and remains so today. For example, in 2017 a survey declared Kashmir the most corrupt of the 20 biggest Indian states.[3]

Notably: the bulk of public offices are run by Hindus as it has been ever since Islam spread in this part of the world. There is no evidence that the average Buddhist, Hindu or Sikh was better off than the typical Muslim and in 1931, the Dogra king's subjects began demanding relief from the tyrannical rule, drawing inspiration from the revolt of Indians against the British. Oppression of the Punch Muslims by the last Dogra king, is the direct cause of the Kashmir War of 1947–48.

Lord Mountbatten, the last Viceroy, came to India in February 1947 and a mere four months later, presented a detailed plan for Partition. In outline, it mandated contiguity: no princely state could claim independence because that would lead to a Balkanisation of India, however, if a state bordered both India and Pakistan, it could choose to whom it wanted to accede. Kashmir was contiguous to India and Pakistan. Being a Muslim majority state, everyone – including, at first, India's 'Iron Man' Sardar Patel who integrated the princely kingdoms into the new India – assumed it would go to Pakistan and this would be the end of the problem.[4]

However, Nehru had a sentimental attachment to the state and well he might, as it was a kingdom of mountains, forest, and lakes, gentle people and home of Sufism, a syncretic religion embodying the best of Hinduism, Islam and Sikhism. This was exactly the enlightened secular mix that the idealist Nehru would have wanted for India. Kashmir was also a blessed relief from the scorching hot Indian plains, one reason it had been coveted for centuries. Hari Singh procrastinated about joining India or Pakistan while the Punch rebellion expanded and Pakistani pressure to join Pakistan increased. A Pakistani blockade forced Hari Singh's hand and he asked to accede to India. Although Mountbatten made accession conditional on a later plebiscite, he went along with Nehru and accepted Hari Singh's accession to India. This left Pakistan saying the situation was unfair, especially since India had seized Junagarh on the grounds that a Muslim king could not decide the fate of a Hindu majority kingdom. They wanted to know why a Hindu king should now decide the fate of a Muslim majority kingdom.

India argued that the Independence of India Act said nothing about majorities or minorities, only that the ruler would decide and Hari Singh had decided for India. Junagarh, India said, had no boundary with Pakistan. Pakistan argued that Junagarh was contiguous by sea. India had no problem accepting East Bengal's merger with Pakistan although the region was not contiguous to

PAKISTAN CHINA FRIENDSHIP HIGHWAY
巴中友谊公路
TRANSIT VEHICLES KEEP TO RIGHT

A meeting of Pakistani and Chinese representatives on the construction site of the Karakoram Highway (also known as 'KKH', 'N-35' or 'National Highway 35' in Pakistan, and as the 'China-Pakistan Friendship Highway' in the PRC). Construction was initiated in 1966 and the highway stretches over 1,300km (810 miles) from Hasan Abdal in Punjab province to the Khunjerab Pass in Gilgit-Baltistan, where it becomes the China National Highway 314. (Albert Grandolini collection)

West Pakistan and could be accessed only by a sea voyage of 5,400km or by overflying India, a distance of 2,200km.

It is obvious that right from the independence of India, there was chicanery and special pleading on both sides and there was no impartial partition – nor could there be one. For example, the 'choice' of the people of Sindh and the north-west Frontier for Pakistan was rigged, and the British made this possible because they wanted West Pakistan as a military bulwark against the Soviet Union. They would have preferred for India to stay united and join Britain as a dominion as a second-class Australia, Canada and South Africa, or even with nominal equality. Nehru wanted to see the back of the colonists and he shot down this idea. Britain thought India and Pakistan could be separate dominions but Nehru remained uninterested. Kalat – modern day Baluchistan – was not even part of British India, yet asked for a merger with India. Nehru was uninterested and in 1948, Pakistan violated the UN Charter by invading and capturing the province. Again, Kalat was contiguous to India by sea.

When the British announced they were leaving India, they cancelled land leases given to the Punch Muslims, who counted amongst themselves 50,000 stalwart soldiers of the Raj. The back story is complicated but has to do with Punch sending 30,000 soldiers to the British Indian Army in the First World War and 60,000 in the Second World War. The land reverted to Kashmir's ruler, who promptly raised the rents five times,[5] and then imposed more taxes to force Punch to pay for its own repression. The Punch and other tribes revolted, including those from Mirpur.

Pakistan cleverly seized the opportunity to provide material and diplomatic aid to the rebellion and took over control of the tribal revolt. It is untrue that the first Kashmir war was started by Pakistan: it was already in progress before Independence. For the rest of the world, Pakistan's version of the early months of the war and Hari Singh's accession to India, is rife with propaganda pushed by outsiders. A more neutral view is given by outsiders, some of whom stress that the idea that Kahsmir should be independent just because its people wanted independence, is a fantasy.

The idea that Kashmir should be independent just because its people wanted independence, is a fantasy. If India accepted independence of Kashmir, in 12 hours Pakistan would arrive in Srinagar to start its conquest of the state. The UN declaration of Human Rights speaks of self-determination from colonial servitude. It says nothing about minorities within an independent former colony.

No evidence invalidates Hari Singh's accession to India; he asked India for help which was his right when the tribes began advancing, however, Nehru did not want to sign the accession with the Kashmir tyrant, thus keeping his hands clean by his self-imposed standards. Rather, he wanted the jailed Muslim leader, Sheikh Abdullah, the closest Kashmir had to a popular leader – but a secret secessionist who wanted his own independent country – to sign the accession. This resulted in gratuitous delays while Nehru considered the position. Raiders were at the gates of Srinagar before he told Sardar Patel that yes, he did want Kashmir to be part of India.

Naturally but wrongly, Pakistan seized on these ways of thinking and events that do not neatly fill the official Indian timeline, to question the legitimacy of accession. Just as India used East Bengal's aspirations for independence to break up the country of Pakistan, Karachi (then the Pakistani capital) used the Punch rebels to try and take Kashmir. It spoke of the rights of Kashmiris while denying these rights to Kashmiris in the part of Kashmir it controlled, and denying the rights to the people of Gilgit and Baltistan, which it continues doing until this day. There was also the ruthless suppression of the rights of the East Pakistanis. By May 1948, the Pakistan Army had fully taken over the war.

General Agha Muhammad Yahya Khan (colloquially 'Yahya Khan'), the Commander-in-Chief of the Pakistan Army since 1966 and the third president of Pakistan. He suspended the constitution and enforced martial law in 1969. Although holding the country's first nationwide elections in 1970, he delayed the power transition to the victorious Sheikh Mujibur Rahman from East Pakistan, in turn provoking the Bangladesh Liberation War of March 1971 and thus, the Indo-Pakistani War of December the same year. (Albert Grandolini collection)

A complication from the start is that Kashmir harboured ideas of independence, which was not an option under the terms of Partition. Yet another complication was that while the Sunnis were in the majority, the Shias, Sikhs, Buddhists, Hindus, and the herding tribes (also Sunnis) did not want to be ruled by the Sunnis. For Pakistani Kashmiris, to even ask for independence was a criminal act which could be prosecuted.

Foreign Intervention

What follows is also an over simplification of a complex issue. China did not want to get involved and particularly did not want to assist a reactionary power suppressing a 'people's revolt'. Pakistan's regional allies refused to enter the war in any meaningful way and in the case of Iran, Teheran was frightened of Soviet counteraction and failed to live up its commitments such as bolstering the Pakistan Air Force through deployment of its fighter jets in Pakistan.

Since March 1971, the US knew that Pakistan could not reman united. . The US was concerned (correctly) that India would break up West Pakistan. The Indian Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi refused to give any assurances, aggravating Nixon and Kissinger. Making matters worse was the Indo-Soviet 'Friendship Treaty' which angered Nixon and Kissinger again as they saw it as major loss of world standing for Washington due to the dogmatic approach of America's thinking. Lastly, the duo convinced themselves their opening to China would fail if the US was shown to be an unreliable ally, although this anxiety had no basis in reality.

Moscow played a dual game and succeeded in duping India. Moscow's aim was to establish itself firmly in India while also keeping Pakistan on its side, and thus stage a broad penetration of South Asia. On the one hand, Moscow told India it would protect Delhi from the US. On the other hand, Russia in conjunction with the US, kept a tight rein preventing India from achieving its

Prime Minister Indira Gandhi greeting high-ranking officers of the Indian Army during a visit to the formations deployed along India's western borders. (Albert Grandolini collection)

读毛主席的书，听
毛主席的话，照毛主席
的指示办事，做毛主席
的好战士。

A photograph from one of many meetings between PR Chinese and Pakistani delegations in the late 1960s. Following a period of lavish deliveries of armament, in the late 1960s the government in Beijing found itself facing the turmoil of the so-called Cultural Revolution. In combination with the winter in the Himalayas, the PR China was thus in no condition to support its ally during the war of December 1971. (Albert Grandolini collection)

objectives, as India would have emerged from the war as a strong neutral with no patience for Soviet machinations.

Moscow's intelligent dual game first manifested itself in the 1965 War, when Moscow persuaded a naïve and confused India to accept a ceasefire just as the Indian counter-offensive began and thus, saved Pakistan. Moscow established a firm geostrategic presence in the Indian subcontinent and then attempted to supply arms to Pakistan in 1968 but backed down due to Indian protests. This did not mean that Moscow had given up its long-term plan of being the controlling balancer between the two adversaries and it found its next opportunity in 1971 as each power pursued their own interest.

Tactical, Operational, and Strategic Levels of War[6]

There is a need understand the complete failure of both sides in the 1971 Western campaign.

The tactical stage of war is easily understood – that is the actual fighting. The strategic stage is also easily understood; the overall desired outcome of a war which goes beyond merely defeating the enemy on the battlefield. Military victory and defeat can happen at the tactical level whereas the purpose of war is at a strategic level and involves geostrategy and geopolitics.

The difficult part is the operational level because at the bottom it bleeds into the tactical and at the top into the strategic. In academic terms, the operational aspect is vague but critical. This book uses the Russian definition of operational: the link between tactical and strategic.

In the case of India and Pakistan, the author puts forward the notion that their wars have always been and continue to be, fought on a tactical level. While India refuses to think strategically, Pakistan has since 1971, designed a strategy around its limited means. In 1971, neither Pakistan nor India showed signs of strategy being considered.

In the east, given India was a developing nation, it fought a competent and skilful war of manoeuvre to liberate East Pakistan in 25 days, even if it did not meet Western – and particularly American – standards.[7] Yet, despite the well fought eastern campaign, victory was inevitable as India outnumbered Pakistan 3:1 on land, 10:1 in the air and put Pakistan under a 100 percent sea blockade. The title of an Indian memoir of the war – *No way but surrender* – accurately sums up the situation.[8]

However, the western campaign has been described with brutal honesty by, amongst others, Brigadier Bobby Sodhi, Commander of the 301st Mountain Brigade in East Pakistan, who describes the true capability of the Army as mediocre.[9] Sukhwant Singh, writing as a former senior Indian Army officer, tactfully suggests Indian generalship was not as it was purported to be. K.C. Praval, the unofficial historian of the Indian Army, updated his first book to say that Indian leadership was flawed. Pakistani leadership was also exceptionally poor and has been criticised many times by Pakistan's leading military historian, Major A.H. Amin.

This book describes the western front battles from both the Indian and Pakistani sides and the leadership deficit on both sides is discussed in detail due to it being the defining feature of the western campaign.

The 1971 India-Pakistan War consisted of two campaigns, east and west. It had three objectives: separation of East Pakistan into an independent country; the recovery of Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (lost to Pakistan in the 1947–48 War); and the destruction of Pakistan's war potential in the following 50 years.

India achieved the first objective as discussed in Volume 1; the second and third objectives failed due to coordinated US and Soviet efforts to prevent the destruction of Pakistan. Although India never openly talked of destroying Pakistan, success with the second and third objectives would have meant the demise of the county; the individual provinces were, in any case, inclined to gravitate around their own centres of gravity and would have become independent and protected by India.

Despite India's oft-repeated assertion it had no designs on West Pakistan proper – implicitly excluding Kashmir which India claimed in its entirety – in order to secure its tenuous line of communication between east Punjab and Kashmir, India planned to occupy four districts of West Punjab bordering Kashmir, namely, Narowal, Sialkot, Gujrat and the eastern part of Jhelum. This India termed a 'temporary adjustment of the border', but once gained, India would not have returned these districts. India hoped Pakistan's loss of East Bengal, Pakistan, Pakistan Occupied Kashmir, and the Punjab districts would create fissiparous tendencies whereby the North-West Frontier Province, Baluchistan and Sind, would become independent under India's protection. West Punjab would fall of its own accord in due time. There were variations in the final hoped-for outcome; for example, North-West Frontier Province could have federated with Afghanistan without objection from India.

To those familiar with the large, somnambulant, torpid and easy-going India, the not-fully articulated plan described may seem a fevered fantasy. Indians themselves say they are expert at 'snatching defeat from the jaws of victory',[10] and this could easily have applied to the 1971 war plan. Nonetheless, timidity aside, there was no reason why it could not have been realised, except the prospect suited neither the Soviets, nor Nixon and his adviser Kissinger, nor China, and Mrs. Gandhi could not stand up to them. While the Soviet concerns were genuine, the Nixon-Kissinger duo mislead themselves because far from any loss, the US would have benefited from a strong, neutral India.

Alas for India and fortunately for Pakistan, India did not start its offensive on 1 or 2 December (accounts vary). The General Officer Commanding Western Command was told by Army HQ at the last minute, to cancel his offensive. Now alas for Pakistan and fortunately for India, General Headquarters (GHQ) Pakistan ordered a pre-emptive air strike on the afternoon of 3 December, in the belief India was about to attack and it must act. The pre-emptive strike, doubtless inspired by Israel's spectacular air offensive in 1967, saw 32 sorties launched. Had Pakistan planned for a real air strike, it could have launched 300 and caused serious damage to Indian positions. Instead, the 32 sorties achieved nothing but provided India with the excuse to say Pakistan started the war. What Pakistan could not know was that had it held its hand on 3 December, there would have been no Western campaign. Thanks to Moscow's orders, India could attack only if attacked and even by 10 December, Moscow began squeezing India to stop its advance in the east. This time, India showed courage, gambled, ignored Moscow and managed to take Dacca before the Soviets or UN could prevent it. In the best traditions of war and unexpected victory, Indian East Command won through in a chaotic and confused atmosphere.

India's 'Ashoka Complex'

Why was it important that India not be seen as attacking first?[11] Lieutenant Colonel Athele, a well-known historian in the Indian Ministry of Defence explains India's 'Ashoka complex'.[12] Ashoka was one of the greatest Indian emperors and ruled during the third century BCE. After causing his share of suffering by his expansionism, he converted to pacifism. Ironically, for a man who was forgotten until rediscovered by an English scholar in the nineteenth century, his pacifism shaped modern India. This is a Gandhian-Nehruvian concept of the elite and has no bearing on the majority of Indians, who are as much or as little inclined to war as people anywhere in the world. The dichotomy between India's deeply ingrained pacifism and the practical need to use force, has led to allegations of Indian hypocrisy; this was a large factor in the disagreements between Nixon and Mrs. Gandhi.

India's claim to 'fight for self-defence only' has caused endless trouble to the country since 1947. It is the unseen hand in every strategic failure, including the War of 1971. The author puts forward the view that India's insistence on not attacking first, ends up making India looking passive and weak and is detrimental to national security, going on to argue that it even invites the aggression of Pakistan and China by its passivity.

Indian pacifism is also devoid of all meaning because since 21–22 November India had already unleashed seven divisions against East Pakistan.

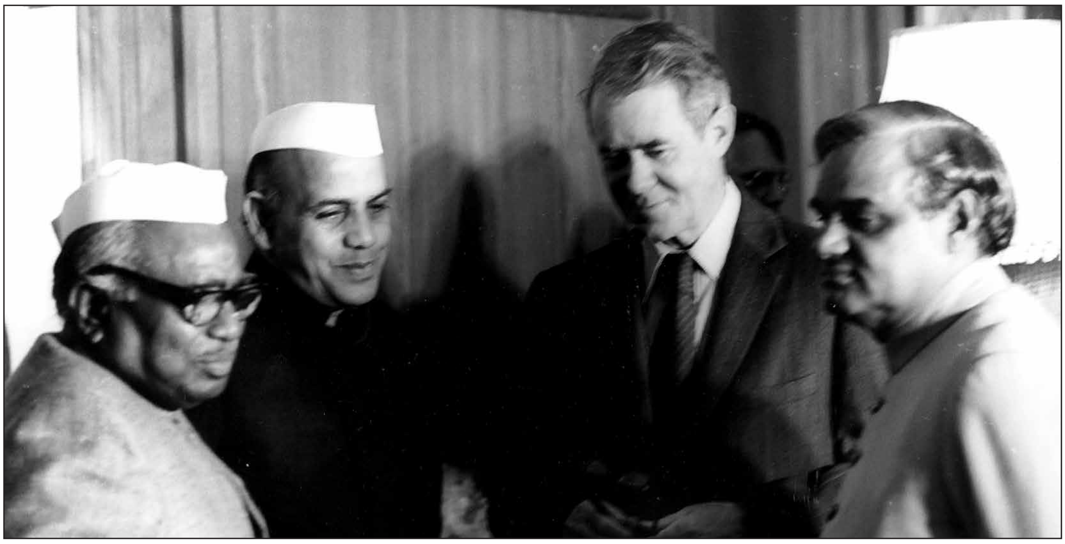
Strategic Planning

The Indian strategic plan in West Pakistan was simple and – except for timid generals – within its military capability but required a longer war. The plan was centred around:

- increasing defence-in-depth in the Pathankot salient by seizing the line Narowal-Zafarwal;
- seizing four districts of West Punjab to enhance the depth of Indian positions in Jammu region;
- cutting Pakistan in two by seizing Pakistan territory from Rahim Yar Khan to the Kutch, while …
- defending the Indian border with Pakistan everywhere else in the west; gain control of offensive launch points (termed 'enclaves') in Pakistani territory, sometimes just a few kilometres deep, for potential future operations.

Complicating the issue, India's plan used a long war model patterned on the Second World War, whereas its previous wars, except for that in Kashmir in 1947–48, were short. Moreover, India to this day, lacks an economic and military mobilisation setup for a long war. As a result, it has been unable to achieve major results. East Bengal 1971 was the exception as India began the war 14 days before the official date of 3 December and the Bengal rebels severely undermined the Pakistan Army. India also fought a fluid war in the east and the same was not possible in the west and India's plan to strike first was sabotaged by a political leadership unable to stand up to its Soviet patron.

Due to its lack of resources, Pakistan planned for a short war. The contradiction being that to win quickly meant attacking first



Indian Defence Minister Jagjivan Ram (1st left) the architect of the Indian military strategy as of 1971, in the company of (from left to right) Indian Minister of Commerce, Mohan Dharia, the US Secretary of State, Cyrus Vance and Indian Minister of External Affairs Atal Bihari Vajpayee. (US Embassy New Delhi)

and keeping the initiative, which Pakistan failed to do in 1965 and 1971 and Pakistan's force structure was based on the myth that the Indians would quickly collapse. The closest it came to strategy was a wholly fantastical plan by Pakistan Eastern Command that it should attack westward while the main Pakistan army should advance east; the two prongs would meet in Central India. No responsible Pakistani general ever espoused this absurd strategy. Rather, Pakistan limited itself to seizing territory in Kashmir, not with the idea of trading it for East Pakistan, but with the idea of keeping it.

Interestingly, the historian of the Indian Ministry of Defence Athele, who searched official documents, found no written evidence of an Indian strategic plan and no evidence that the Indian armed forces ever received one. The reasons for this are beyond the ambit of the present discussion, but certainly the top military leadership were verbally informed and laid its war plans accordingly. As far as India was concerned, it was on the defensive.

Somehow, the offensive plan to take East Bengal, Sindh, part of Pakistani Punjab and Southwest Kashmir was ignored. Indians argue (correctly) they had no claims on Sindh and intended to help Sindh become an independent republic under Indian protection. This point is irrelevant because seizing Sindh would have helped in disintegrating Pakistan. As far as Pakistan was concerned, there was nothing defensive about the Indian plan; India was trying to break up Pakistan.

The Lack of Military Strategy

While India had a clearly delineated geo-strategical plan, at least to the few political leaders who made it, India failed on military strategy. There were two principal architects of the strategy: the tough Defence Minister Jagjivan Ram, an 'untouchable' from the low caste Bihari – a people seldom thought of as martial – and Y. B. Chavan, then Finance Minister but who had also served four years as defence minister after the 1961 China debacle. Chavan was a Maharashtrian, a people known for their martial valour. An anonymous source relates that although Chavan began became nervous as the war went on, Jagjivan Ram alone kept reminding Mrs. Gandhi that this was the chance of a millennium and India must continue.

Eastern Command's Chief of Staff was an iconoclast, very well read and a free thinker who looked at each situation in its own light. He noted in his memoirs that as late as 1971, strategy was not even taught in the Indian Army putting an end to the need to ask 'why was Indian strategy so poor?' The same applied to the Pakistan Army, which was even worse in this respect.

Yet, the Indian National Defence University dates back to 1960 and the Pakistan War College in 1970.

Casualty Avoidance

Indian commanders were solicitous of their men and disinclined to push them when casualties threatened to become high. The men were all long service volunteers and could not be treated as cannon fodder. In addition, there was the casualty avoidance tradition inherited from the British. In the First World War, the British recklessly expended the blood of their troops, men and field officers alike. From a population of 46 million, 880,000 soldiers died, 7.5 percent of the male population.[13] Over 1.5 million were wounded, meaning over 20 percent became casualties. This left the population traumatised. Consequently, in the Second World War, the British were cautious, even though they were accused of caring nothing for the losses of imperial troops such as the Australian, Canadian and South Africans. While the British may have used imperial armies as shock troops, they did noy directly command the dominion armies who were aggressive and gung ho. The Indian Army at 2 million, was the largest of the imperial/colonial armies fighting alongside the British and lost only 78,000 men over 5 ½ years of war. This caution carried over to the independent Indian Army. In four weeks of combat, India's 23 or so divisions engaged in the 1971 war lost only 3,800 men or less than 150 per division.

During the First World War, France lost 1.4 million men from a population of 41 million. The losses, however, tore the heart out of France and were a major reason it chose to surrender after only six weeks of active combat operations in 1940. However, in those six weeks, French killed were running at over 2,000/day.

1

THE DIVISION-FORCE BALANCE

To understand why the 1971 War went badly for Pakistan, it is important to examine the division-force balance from 1947 to 1971. Although Table 1 appears to show a large number of divisions being raised by Pakistan in 1947–48 many of these were only just being raised, and many with only two brigades.[1] Jammu and Kashmir Force was a divisional HQ with multiple brigades.

In 1970, immediately prior to the East Bengal uprising, Pakistan had a solid reserve of [2] divisions:

- Reserve A (Army Reserve north): six armoured and nine infantry divisions
- Reserve B (Army Reserve South): one armoured and 16 infantry divisions
- Reserve C: seven infantry divisions.

Holding (north to south):

- 12th Infantry Division (double strength) and 23rd Division (raised July 1971)
- 8th and 15th Divisions (under HQ I Corps)
- 10th and 11th Divisions (Under HQ IV Corps, Lahore)
- 18th Division (Sindh sector)
- 14th Division (East Bengal)
- 17th and 33rd Divisions (undergoing work-ups)
- establishment of 35th and 37th Divisions began in November 1971

Pakistan's Strategy

Pakistan's strategy since 1948 had been 'the defence of the east lies in the west'. The Pakistanis were no fools: they realised a two-front war was unfeasible because of the separation of the two wings (1,600km by overflying India, 4,000km by sea) and the lack of resources to sustain two armies independent of each other. Major territorial losses were anticipated in the east – to be recovered by victories in the west. These conditional strategies were inherently flawed, especially when Pakistan had no margin of superiority in the west.

At the start of 1948, Pakistan had only one division of two weak brigades in the east, which by 1971 had expanded to four brigades. Pakistan's strategy was to delay an Indian offensive by falling back on Dacca, while pursing the offensive in the west.

In the 1947–48 War, India was in no position to attack East Pakistan – a single division was available and would have sufficed, but geopolitically India, with its usual defensive approach, did not want to take the Kashmir war either to the Pakistan Punjab or to East Bengal. In 1965, the US played a behind the scenes role in persuading India not to invade East Bengal, although both India and Pakistan saw some sharp air action. The US had influence with India because it was by then, helping India's military build-up against China.

The problem for Pakistan – as has been noted several times – began with the 1963 Indian build-up after their defeat by China in 1962. Earlier, India was satisfied by keeping one division against East Bengal but then India raised 15 divisions to supplement its 10. Pakistan did not react, feeling its 10 divisions sufficed to protect the country as – so it rationalised – 11 of India's divisions were tied up against China. Should not the four extra divisions added to the Pakistan front have alarmed Pakistan? Yes, but due to lazy thinking and financial constraints, Pakistan chose to ignore the change in balance. Again, unsupported assumptions about what the adversary is thinking do not produce good strategy. The lazy thinking was with the US on Pakistan's side India could not do much.[3]

As noted several times, sending the elite 9th and 16th Divisions to East Bengal upset the whole show. The other significant remaining shortcoming was the lack of a corps HQ for 8th and 15th Divisions. Against these 15 divisions, India had 14 against Pakistan and 11 against China so Pakistan was in a good position to defend. However, India attacked in the winter of 1971 and boldly took the calculated risk of deploying seven of its mountain divisions against Bangladesh. As a result, India had a massive superiority in East Bengal (seven divisions vs Pakistan's three; Pakistan's 36th and 39th Divisions were dummies that fooled no one).

Pakistan's strategy required an offensive against India as soon as possible. Instead, Pakistan prevaricated and lost the initiative. There were three reasons for this:

> 1) Pakistan was in the middle of a civil war which thanks to skilful Indian propaganda, was vilified by most of the world. This was a huge blow to Pakistan Army morale. As noted in Volume 1, the politicisation of the Pakistan Army under martial law from 1954 onwards, destroyed its professionalism.
>
> 2) Pakistan was ruled by a feudal elite which refused to make the taxation sacrifices needed to maintain a proper defence and instead relied on bluster to believe it could defeat India any time it wanted.
>
> 3) As Major Amin repeatedly 5points out, there was no focus on the operational art of war.[4]

On the tactical level, Pakistan followed the British system to 1956 which emphasised a very thoroughly rehearsed and simple set of tactics adapted to a partially educated army. Nonetheless, as

Table 1: Division-sized Formations of the Pakistani and Indian Armies, 1947–1970

Year	Pakistan	India
1947–48	6th, 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th, 12th, 14th, 15th	1st Armoured; 4th, 5th, 20th Infantry, Jammu & Kashmir (Jammu and Kashmir) Force (then divided in into 19th and 25th), 26th Infantry
1956–59	disbanded 6th and 9th	17th and 23rd
1962–70	6th and 11th Divisions	2nd, 3rd, 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th, 14th, 15th, 36th, 39th, 54th, 57th

noted in Volume I that by 1971, the 1966–68 and 1971 expansions left 40 percent of the army inadequately trained.[5] What passed for operational level paid lip service to the German deep strike: to hold the front lightly, push into the rear, overrun the enemy's artillery and close-to-the front logistic bases. There was no mention of destabilising the enemy's military and political leadership sending it cascading into a series of ever bigger failures, a critical aspect of German strategy. Neither was there provision to provide the Pakistan military with the means to conduct this operational level: Pakistan had been equipped by the US for 10–14 days of war against the Soviet Union until US help arrived.

Why is the 1971 War so Important for India and Pakistan?

Pakistan was divided and the defeat was traumatising as Pakistan lost to its enemy India. However, East Bengal should not have been forced to be included in Pakistan in the first place. From the beginning, East Bengal resented West Pakistan (i.e., Punjabi) domination. West Pakistan could have made the union work had it agreed to a confederation and treated the Bengalis as equals but West Pakistan's mindset was such it did not do so. At some point, East Bengal would have split away as the only thing in common was religion which is insufficient when there is a different language, culture, and history. The two areas had previously little to do with each other and there has not, since 1971, been any call for the two wings to reunite.

While the eastern campaign was a clear victory for India, the Western campaign was marred by Indian incompetence. Despite Pakistan's serious mistakes and tendency to be guided by emotion rather than by realism, it at least managed to hold off India even as it committed mistakes of its own. The sole Indian victory was 11th Infantry Division's advance into Sind. Within its limits, the division performed well; though it is best to appreciate much of the Indian gain was due to Pakistan's strategy to trade space for time and the sole Pakistan brigade engaged, almost immediately gave up most of the ground that India took.

The advance down the Shoyk River valley by the doughty Major Rimchen, was a gallant action, but though it gained 800 metres of territory, it was of no significance and a small affair with less than 1,500 men in total engaged. In Kashmir, 19th Division captured around 300km^2 in a series of skirmishes and then lost almost all of it after the ceasefire. 25th Division defeated a two-brigade Pakistan offensive yet failed to seize an especially important opportunity by making a counter-offensive that could have gained India several important advantages. 10th Division was defeated, despite some very hard fighting and suffered the most casualties of any Indian division in the war. The Indian main strike in the North Punjab (Shakergargh) was also a fiasco due to the actions of politicians and generals.

In the Punjab, 15th and 7th Divisions passively defended as ordered. 67th (I) Infantry Brigade's bitter action at Fazilka was a defeat. Foxtrot Sector, the size of a reinforced division, hesitated and waited: again through no fault of the field troops. 12th Division ran away thanks to its commander, who simply refused to fight despite repeated berating by his theatre commander. India's strike force did nothing except enjoy the winter sun; a severe command failure at the highest levels was responsible. While India has every right to celebrate its eastern victory, the western campaign was an embarrassment.

So why the triumphalism that India has shown for 50 years? The reason is psychological. It is widely said that the war was the first Indian victory against a Muslim army for 1000 years, though 800 years is more accurate, after Mohammad of Ghor defeated Prithvi Raj Chauhan in 1194, (and after Chauhan chivalrously let the defeated Mohammad of Ghor go free in 1192). Earlier Muslim invaders of India came to plunder; Muhammad of Ghor came to make a kingdom in India, and this opened the way for the fall of India to the Muslims. India was severely oppressed by the rise of Islam and later by the British. For all those centuries, Indians felt helplessly victimised. Candidly, by the fifth century India began its long decline from its peak in the Gupta era. That is why the Muslims, central Asian raiders (the Huns) and the British could hold the subcontinent at their mercy. The 1971 War gave India new confidence and a sense of worth, leading it to optimistically hope for a new age. It was not long before China, which had the same per capita as India, shot ahead to a GDP five times that of India, and became the rising world power that India wanted to be, again relegating India to third-class status. However, 1971 remains a bright spot in the last dismal 75 years, and Indians cling to the fading remembrance of that war. Major General Sukhwant Singh was the first informed writer of significance to raise a cautioning hand and asked if 1971 was as glorious a victory as India believed. Still, even he mutes his criticism.

2

BALANCE OF FORCES

Some Pakistani military historians mordantly make the point that all Pakistan had to do was raise two more divisions for East Pakistan to avoid defeat. This seems unlikely to be true unless we postulate five additional four-battalion independent brigades as well. Nonetheless, there is no doubt, Pakistan had too few divisions and as of 1970, no Pakistani leader could have anticipated a war in the east.

Frontier Corps Wings

Pakistan's frontier paramilitary organisation had the western frontier and the eastern frontier, under the Ministry of the Interior, The eastern forces were termed Rangers; the western as the Frontier Corps (FC). Both were commanded by army lieutenant colonels and the wing had other army officers who were usually on a secondment of two-to-three years, after which they rotated back to their regular units. In 1971, the troops had inadequate equipment and training, very few vehicles and were badly paid by Pakistan Army standards. They were akin to border police and additionally kept the peace in the tribal areas of North-West Frontier Province and Baluchistan. Nonetheless, the Frontier Corps recruits had a long tradition of warfare. The FC's men were comfortable at high altitudes and fierce fighters. Today, the number of wings have been substantially

Table 2: Outline Order of Battle for Indo-Pakistani War of 1971

Sector	India	Pakistan
North Kashmir	121st (I) Infantry Brigade +	3 paramilitary scouts wings
Kashmir	10th, 19th, 25th, Divisions	12th, 23rd Divisions
Jammu	26th, 36th, 39th, 54th Divisions	8th, 15th, 6th Armoured, 17th Divisions
North Punjab	7th, 15th Divisions	10th, 11th Divisions
South Punjab	Foxtrot Sector (4 brigades)	33rd Division, 25th and 105th Brigades
Desert	11th, 12th Divisions	18th Division
Kutch	Ad hoc army/BSF task force	Militia battalions
Strike force	1st Armoured, 14th Divisions	1st Armoured, 7th Divisions

enhanced and reequipped due to the Afghanistan War 1979–89 and Pakistan's war on terrorism.

Laydown by Divisions

Overall, India had 13 divisions to Pakistan's 11. Nonetheless, Pakistan's 17th and 33rd Divisions were newly raised in November 1970. They had a mixture of new, reservist and fully trained battalions and although their integral artillery brigades came from 9th and 16th Divisions sent to Bangladesh, the divisions cannot be considered fully capable. 23rd Division was only five months old, although most of its battalions were experienced, coming from 12th Division. This division was intended to reduce the extraordinarily long 500km Area of Responsibility of 12th Division, from Tithwal to the Chenab River, which previously had seven brigades of four battalions each. For the war, 12th Division controlled four brigades and 23rd Division had three brigades. An additional four brigades including an armoured brigade, reinforced 23rd Division, although, as will be shown, two were not committed to the Chhamb battle, forcing Pakistan to settle for a minor instead of a decisive victory.

Chronology of Pakistan Moves Before and During the Indo-Pakistan War of 1971 in the West

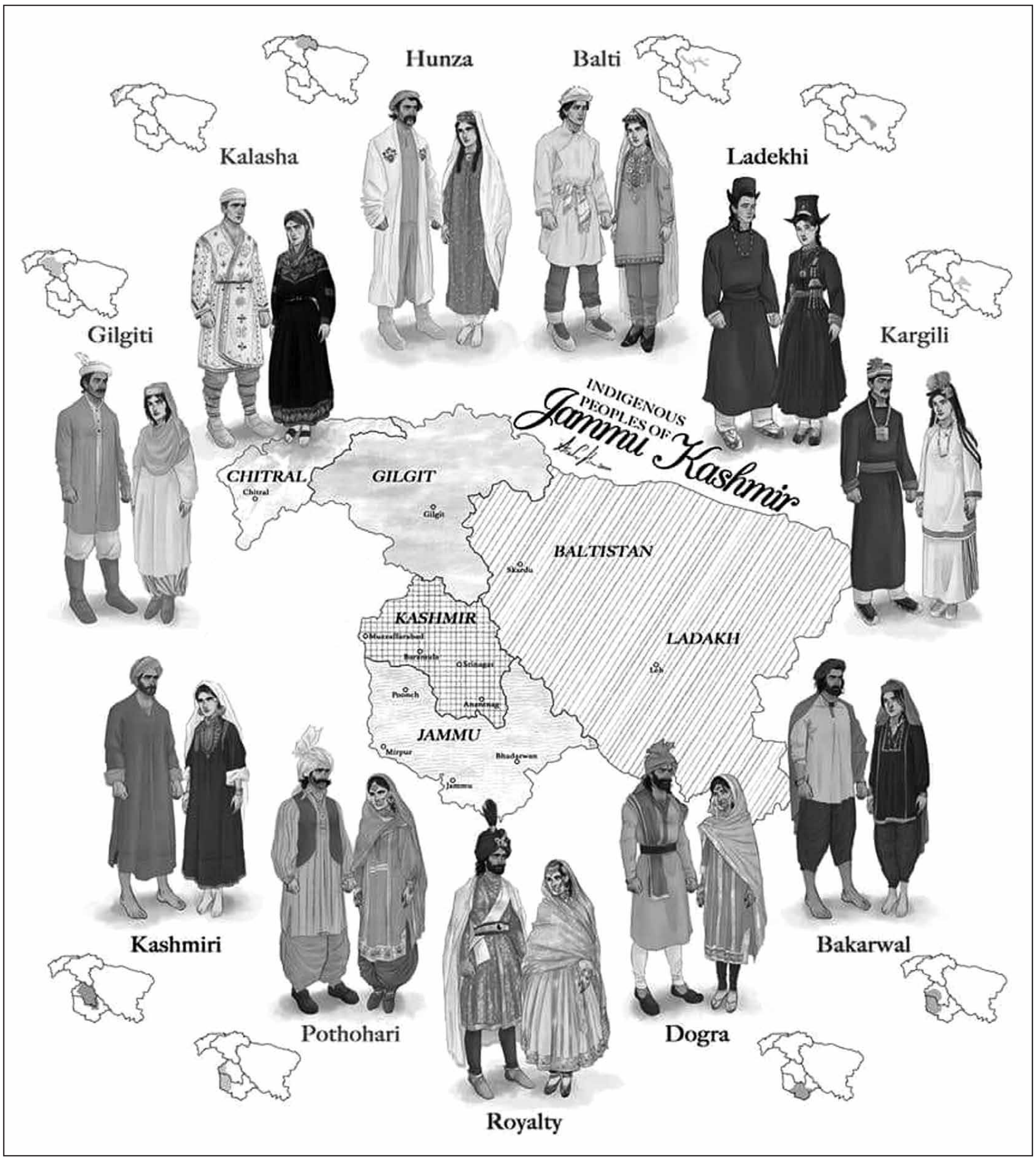
The Hamdoor Rehman Commission Report provided the following chronology of major Pakistani decisions:

- 3 December: 7th Division started moving into assembly area Dipalpur-Chunian-Sahiwal. 475th Army Engineer Group also commenced movement from Chak Jhumra to south Sahiwal. 104th Brigade Group (7th Division) moved to Arifwala-Pakpattan.
- 4 December: II Corps artillery moved to the Haveli-Sulemanki area in support of the 105th Brigade Group's operations for expansion of the Sulemanki bridgehead. 124th Brigade arrived at Arifwala from Khanpur. 7th Division's elements also started arriving in their assembly area.
- 5 December: 7th Division completed its move into the assembly area. 124th Brigade reached Vihari. 51st Lancers (corps reconnaissance) arrived in the Bahawalnagar area to strengthen 25th Brigade's position.
- 6 December: 124th Brigade was warned to move to area Haroonabad-Fort Abbas.
- 7 December: The commander, II Corps visited GHQ. One engineer battalion moved to Tibbi Lal Bag for development of routes across the river. One brigade of 33rd Division was warned to take up defence positions in place of 206 Brigade which was engaged in the Loganewala battle, as the 18th Division was reported to have suffered heavily due to enemy air action.
- 8 December: Orders were issued for despatch of one infantry battalion and one mortar battery of 33rd Division to the Chhor area. The move took place during the night of 9–10 December. Meanwhile 7th Brigade, ex-7th Division, crossed Sutlej into area Bahawalnagar-Minchanabad.
- 10 December: GHQ ordered breaking up 33rd Division. The division, less two brigades, was sent to Chhor, one brigade each sent to I Corps area and 18th Division. The HQ, 33rd Division, placed directly under command of GHQ and made responsible for the Chhor area with 55th Brigade. 7th Armoured Brigade broken up and reverted to 6th Armoured Division. Guides Cavalry despatched to 33rd Division.
- 11 December: Headquarters 7th Armoured Brigade re-joined 6th Armoured Division (Army Reserve North).
- 12 December: One infantry battalion of 7th Division placed under command of 105th Brigade on temporary basis. This was to strengthen the position of the expanded bridgehead then being subjected to intense enemy counterattacks.
- 13 December: Conference held at HQ IV Corps attended by commanders II and IV Corps, Chief of General Staff and Quarter Master General examined the possibility of launching an offensive through Khemkaran. Proposal finally dropped. 124th Brigade, ex-33rd Division, arrived I Corps area.
- 14 December: Formal orders issued to II Corps for moving to forward concentration areas prior to launching offensive operations. Reconnaissance parties and reconnaissance regiment of 1st Armoured Division moved into forward concentration area during night 14–15 December.
- 15 December: Regrouping and readjustments carried out in II Corps for impending operations. 102nd Brigade, ex-7th Division, arrived in area Mandi Sadiq Ganj. Tanks of 1st Armoured Division were loaded and movement started last night, but due to train accident the movement had to be postponed. Guides Cavalry reached Chhor area after five days due to dislocation of communication in area south of Rahimyar Khan.
- 16 December: 1st Armoured Division moved to area Vehari and Katora (south of Sutlej). Air cover was provided to II Corps to complete its forward concentration, but at 1845 hours orders were received for 'freezing all movements' from the GHQ. Nine trains of 1st Armoured Division scheduled to move at 1900 hours were dispersed and unloaded. Army Reserve North, ordered to move to area east of Marala-Ravi Link. 315th Brigade, ex-17th Division placed under command of I Corps and moved to area Damthal.
- 17 December: Dispersal and camouflage of formations and units of Army Reserve North effected. Ceasefire came into effect at 1930 hours.

This does not look like an army carefully prepared for a first strike; Pakistan was reacting to an Indian first strike which never

A Note on Jammu and Kashmir

Even in India, there is confusion about the region known as Jammu and Kashmir. The state, as ruled by Hari Singh and ceded to India in 1947, had four quite separate regions: Gilgit/Baltistan to the north (majority Shia Muslims), Kashmir to the west and including the Kashmir Valley (majority Sunni Muslims), Jammu (majority Hindus), and Ladakh (majority Buddhist and Shia). In


Hunza
Balti
Kalasha
Ladekhi
Gilgiti
Kargili
INDIGENOUS PEOPLES OF Jammu Kashmir
CHITRAL
Chitral
GILGIT
Gilgit
BALTISTAN
Skardu
KASHMIR
Muzaffarabad
Baramula
Srinagar
LADAKH
Leh
Poonch
Anantnag
JAMMU
Mirpur
Bhadarwah
Jammu
Kashmiri
Bakarwal
Pothohari
Dogra
Royalty

Indigenous ethnic groups of Jammu & Kashmir. (via Mark Lepko)

took place. The sudden activity towards the end came about due to India preparing its decisive offensive to finish Pakistan.

3

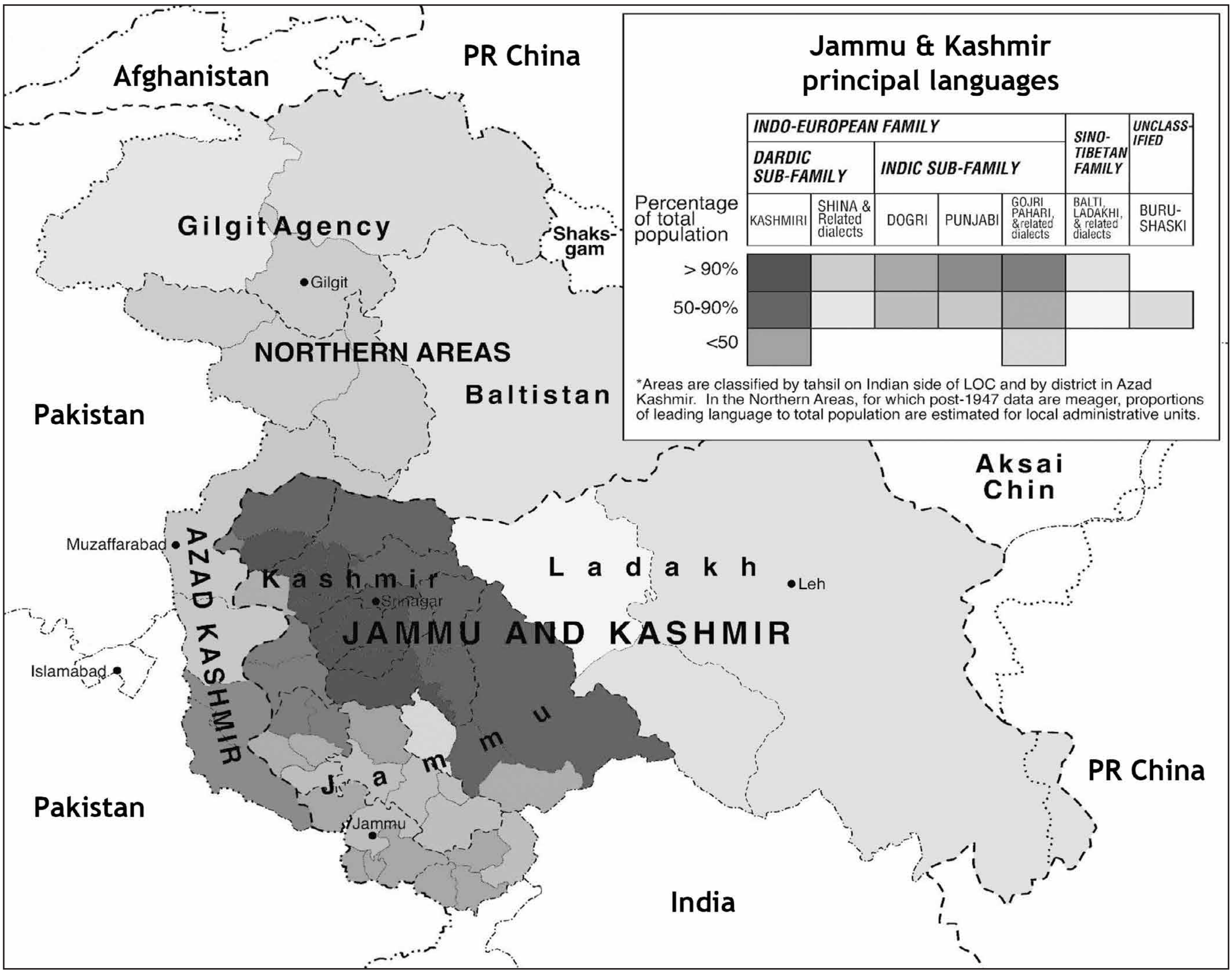
BATTLE FOR KASHMIR

Starting with the north, the Western Front of the Indo-Pakistani War of 1971 was organised as into sectors, including Pratapur, Chewin Rimchen, Northern Gulies, Kargil, Tanghdar, Uri and Kilo-Gulmarg.

Pratapur Sector

On the Indian side, the Pratapur Sector was commanded by Colonel Udai Singh. It was based at Thoise and covered the Shyok River Valley. It was under the control of the 3rd Division (Major-General the 1947–48 War, Pakistan captured Gilgit/Baltistan and a sliver of western Kashmir. In 1950–62 China captured the Aksai Chin region of Ladakh. In 1963 Pakistan voluntarily ceded part of Gilgit-Baltistan to the People's Republic of China in exchange for Beijing's friendship.

As can be seen from accompanying maps, this multi-ethnic region can give rise to complex problems, and these have been abundant over the last 75 years. Moreover, the correct name of the state is Jammu, Kashmir, and Ladakh, not Jammu and Kashmir as the British used and India and Pakistan adopted. The situation is further complicated by the Shia. They are Muslim, but Sunnis consider them heretics – a replay of Catholics and Protestants in England and in Ireland even today. The Sunnis certainly don't consider themselves as Pakistanis because their aim is independence, and the Ladakhis want nothing to do with the Chinese![1]


Afghanistan
PR China
Gilgit Agency
Gilgit
Shaks-gam
NORTHERN AREAS
Baltistan
Pakistan
Aksai Chin
Muzaffarabad
AZAD KASHMIR
Kashmir
Srinagar
Ladakh
Leh
JAMMU AND KASHMIR
Islamabad
Jammu
PR China
Pakistan
Jammu
India
Jammu & Kashmir principal languages
INDO-EUROPEAN FAMILY
DARDIC SUB-FAMILY
INDIC SUB-FAMILY
SINO-TIBETAN FAMILY
UNCLASSIFIED
Percentage of total population
KASHMIRI
SHINA & Related dialects
DOGRI
PUNJABI
GOJRI PAHARI, &related dialects
BALTI, LADAKHI, & related dialects
BURU-SHASKI
> 90%
50-90%
<50
*Areas are classified by tahsil on Indian side of LOC and by district in Azad Kashmir. In the Northern Areas, for which post-1947 data are meager, proportions of leading language to total population are estimated for local administrative units.

A language map of Jammu & Kashmir. (via Mark Lepko)

S.P. Malhotra) at Leh, and at the time, the sector was connected to Leh by an indifferent, rocky, single-lane road over the Khardung La, the highest motorable pass in the world.

The sector was the responsibility of the Ladakh Scouts. They had five companies plus a support company: two facing China. To free the others for offensive action, four companies of Nubra Guards totalling 500 men were raised from the local population and given 15 days training, replacing the Scouts for static guard duties and for holding the firm bases. Three companies of Scouts plus two sections of 81mm mortars and two sections of medium machine guns, attacked on 8 December and by 17 December, the date of the ceasefire, had advanced all the way to Biegdano.

Pakistan had not expected an attack in this sector; after all, it ranged in height from 4,800 metres to 5,600 metres and it was winter with barely nine hours of light. Although the official history does not say so, it is probable that the attack was made on the initiative of the legendary Major Chowang Rimchin. As a boy soldier of 17 with the Nubra Guards, he won a Maha Vir Chakra (MVC), India's second highest combat gallantry award, during the Kashmir War in 1948. In 1962, he won the Sena Medal for gallantry during the China War. In 1971, he led the men himself and they spent nine days in the open, suffering just three battle casualties but 45 to frostbite. Major Rimchin won a bar to the MVC for this exploit. En route, the official history states, the Indian force overran an enemy platoon picket at 5,609 metres, which might just have been the highest battle in the history of warfare. In 1982, Major Rimchin was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel and after his retirement, to Honorary Colonel; he died in 1997.

Table 3: Order of Battle for Pratapur Sector, December 1971

Units	Strength	Notes
Indian Army		
Ladakh Scouts	3 companies	2 companies left to face PRC
Nubra Guards	4 companies	locals, only 15 days of training
4/4th Gurkhas	C Company	4x 81mm mortars, 4 MMGs, 1 battery 107mm/4.2" mortars
Pakistan Army		
2nd Karakoram Scouts	2–3 companies in Chalunka, 1 company in Puin	1 section of MMGs, 2x 81mm mortars

A MAN 415 truck of the Indian Army navigating a typically narrow road which had been literally, blasted out of the mountainside on the Indian administered side of Jammu and Kashmir. (Albert Grandolini collection)

Vignette: Chewin Rimchen

In the case of the Indian Army, the Chewin Rimchen was traditionally controlled by the Nubra Guards: in turn, this traditionally included member of the Chand family, which served in the armed forces already since the times of the First World War. As of 1971, the most prominent begtween these was Major Kushal Chand, elder son of Thakur Mangal Chand, ex-Wazir of Lahul. At 17, he was the first to volunteer for the Guards;[2] helped raise the first company under the guidance of an Indian Army officer and after 10 days training, his platoon of men fought several small actions with the Pakistanis. For this he won his first MVC (second highest bravery award), making him the youngest awardee to this day. Among the battles was one where – again at age 17 – with a handful of his soldiers, he defended Leh long enough for a Gurkha company to arrive. This turned the Battle of Leh to the Indians' advantage. He became the youngest Junior Commissioned Officer in the Indian Army. The Nubra Guards were taken over by the Jammu and Kashmir Militia and later formed the core of the Ladakh Scouts. It must be noted that when he was 42 years old, Chand led an expedition of the Nubra Guards in this area: hardly an age to be cavorting on mountains up to 6,000 metres (<19,000 feet)

The Indian Army History notes an oddity: the Battle of Turtok, en route to Biegdano, took 60 hours – but no casualties were reported from either side. The history makes one of its few acceptable speculations when it says that had the attack started on 4 December and had Turtok not held up the advance for another two days, India might have advanced all the way to Piun. This would have changed the subsequent ground picture in the area because it would have given an approach to the sector through the Chorbat La, an easier pass to negotiate and a much shorter route to the Shyok Valley. This also would have had implications for the Siachen confrontation of the late 1970s and early 1980s.

Rimchen's column was hampered by lack of transport; he had managed to collect some animals and the Ladakh Scouts would have had mules. However, after eight days of advancing, it is possible that the men were exhausted and short of supplies but the official history has no definitive answers for the delays.[1] The attacking force included two platoons of Nubra Guards and considering these men had had just 15 days of training, mainly in learning how to use a rifle, it is curious they were thought fit to accompany the Scouts, who were experienced high-altitude infantry.

Pakistan had no regular troops in the area, only a company of 2nd Karakoram Scouts, later reinforced by one or two companies of the Karakoram and Gilgit Scouts, to oppose Major Rinchen's advance. Pakistan called up pensioners and a handful of 75mm and 3.7-inch howitzers. Rinchen had a 107mm (4.2") ad hoc heavy mortar battery. The opposing troops might 'only' have been Pakistani Scouts, but they were locally recruited and comfortable at extreme altitudes. The Official History does note, however, that the Junior Commissioned Officers were illiterate and unable to read maps. Since they were platoon commanders, and this was a war of platoons, possibly this was a serious handicap. Sukhwant Singh[3] says that they were not properly clothed for winter operations. Some of their outposts were barely section strength. The Ladakh Scouts suffered only three wounded, but 45 frostbite casualties. Pakistan lost 19 killed and 36 POW.

According to the Indian Official History, the offensive did not begin until 8 December instead of at the start of the war on 4 December and that 60 hours was lost at Turtok with zero casualties

Deployment in High Mountains

Sukhwant's comments on the deployment of Pakistan's Scouts will make sense if one considers that in the high mountains a battalion in the extended defence will deploy three rifle companies up and one back. Each forward company will deploy one platoon forward and two back. Each platoon will deploy a rifle section as a trip wire forward and two in reserve. In real life, where units are seldom at their nominal strength (especially not in wartime), a section may have only 7–8 men available instead of the full strength of 10. In the 1962 China War, the Indian Army often deployed 4–5 men with no support from adjacent units because of the political requirement to stretch a small number of men over a very wide front. Forward posts fall back on their platoon once the axis of enemy advance is revealed. If possible, they open fire from carefully chosen positions to ambush and delay the enemy. This layout is a generalisation: the battalion commander will deploy as needed by the terrain and the enemy. The layout is like the deployment in the plains, except since the mountains greatly inhibit lateral movement, the length of the front held can be significantly greater than in the plains.

Indian machine gunners operating a tripod-mounted FN MAG machine gun, high in the mountains of western Jammu & Kashmir. (Albert Grandolini collection)

before the village was captured. The Official History finds this strange. If, however, it is accepted this was an ad hoc operation at Rinchin's initiative, there is no strangeness. The total lapse of almost 7 days can be explained by the need to group and build-up supplies and whilst this would have been only a few tons, only porters and limited animal transport was available.[4]

Praval[5]flatly blames the lack of logistic support, given the -25C (-13F) weather and the defender's piquets being at 5,000 metres, as reasons Indian troops were unable to make significant advances. There is speculation that Rinchen's advance was not planned and entirely due to his initiative which would be in character with his 'take charge' persona. If true, this by itself is a sufficient explanation for the lack of further progress and therefore there is no point in blaming Rinchen's men for not pushing forward, as this was simply an ad hoc attack by an aggressive commander. Nine days of living in the open in the winter, with dwindling supplies, was enough to endure. Pakistani POWs confirmed no one had thought of an attack along the Shyok which is understandable, as India itself had not planned an attack.

As for the Pakistan Scouts, Sukhwant Singh notes their picquets were often of section strength (10 men) and lacked winter clothing. No negligence here, because except for a handful of men, no one operated in the winter. It is possible the Scouts were hastily assembled and sent to occupy their summer positions.

Rimchin's achievements are worth studying because he had an uncanny understanding of mountain terrain. For example, he knew how to attack unseen and at speed along the ridgelines. This enabled him to move rapidly from unlikely directions to achieve surprise. With this gift, he was a natural alpine soldier. He was also fearless and tireless, able to encourage his men to perform well at very high altitudes. Rimchin received much adulation in the Indian Army which was richly deserved.

Kargil Sector

Kargil sector was held by Indian 121st Infantry Brigade under the command of Brigadier M. L. Whig, reporting to Major General S. P. Malhotra, General Officer Commanding (GOC) of 3rd Infantry Division (Leh). The division had three assigned brigades: 70th at

Kiari in south Ladakh; 114th at Chushul in central Ladakh; and 163rd in reserve at Leh.

Northeast Ladakh was held by Sub Sector north with one or two battalions, about whose original history there is next to no information. 70th Brigade included 7th Guards, 18th Punjab, and 2/11th Gurkhas. In addition, 5/3rd Gurkha at Leh, 9th Jammu and Kashmir Militia at Brigade HQ, and 13th Jammu and Kashmir Militia at Dras (west of Kargil) were available to 121st Brigade.

Pakistan had two wings of Karakoram Scouts and one of Northern Scouts. They were apparently well prepared and had mined their picquets.

Interlude

121st Brigade was given an eight-phase plan to seize 80 Pakistani picquets and capture Olthingthang. This would have prevented Pakistan artillery from interdicting the Sonamarg-Leh road. Surprisingly, the Pakistan Scouts fought hard, losing 114 killed by India's estimate, plus 32 POWs. This figure may be suspect: Sukhwant Singh believes only 2–3 companies of Pakistan Scouts may have been engaged. India says it lost 55 KIA. However, 517 men, including 300 from 7th Guards alone became frostbite casualties. The war ended with 44 of the 80 posts still in Pakistan's hands and could be termed a partial victory.

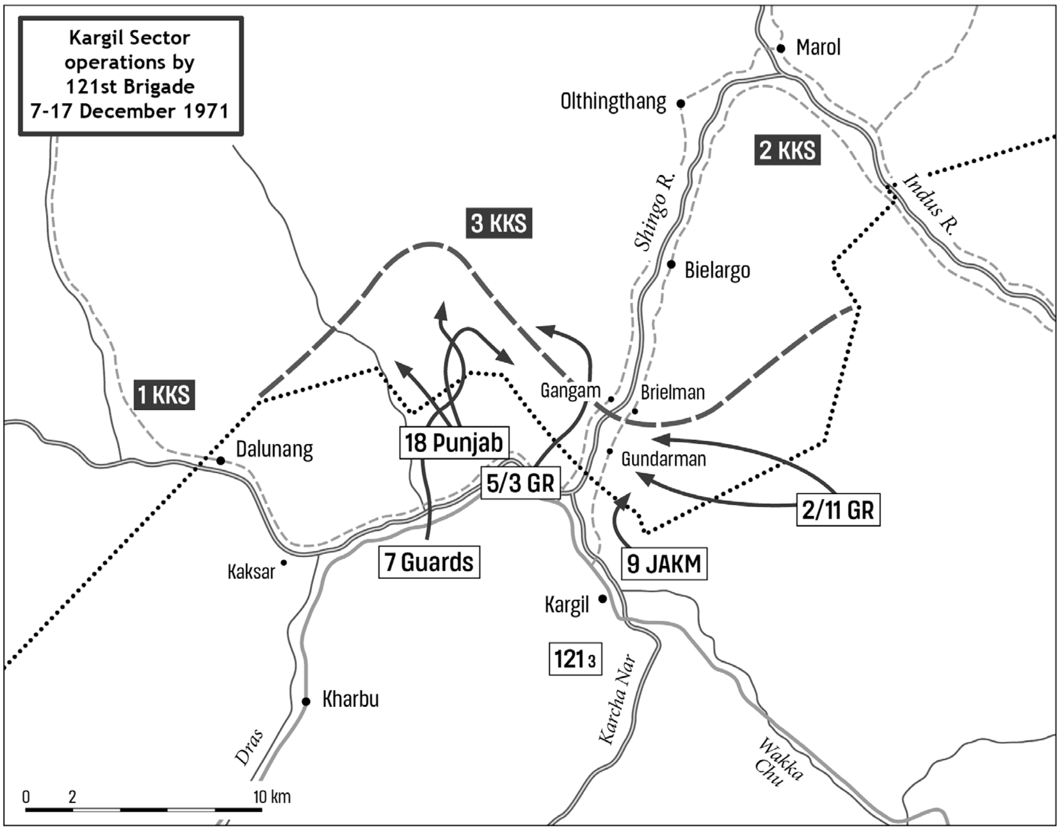
At this point, one might ask why 24 regular Indian Army companies advanced only 4–8km against 10 Pakistani militia companies. The official history states that 121st Brigade had two tasks: security of the Dras-Leh Road and to capture Olthingthang. The priority was defence and for example, 9th Jammu and Kashmir Militia was available only from 13 December and 13th Jammu and Kashmir Militia at Dras, was not available at all. Given the bitter cold, high winds, and

Table 4: 121st (Independent) Infantry Brigade Group, Indian Army, December 1971

Units	Notes
2/11th Gurkha Rifles	
7th Guards	
18th Punjab	
9th Jammu and Kashmir Militia	brigade reserve; attached around 13 December
5/3rd Gurkha Rifles	ex-Leh; probably from 163rd Brigade, 3rd Division
13th Jammu and Kashmir Militia	in Dras; assigned to the brigade
1 regiment	120mm heavy mortars
1 field battery	75mm guns
Indian Air Force detachment	2 de Havilland Vampire fighter-bombers

Table 5: Pakistan Army, Pratapur Sector, December 1971

Units	Notes
1st Karakoram Scouts	opposite western flank of the 121st Brigade
2nd Karakoram Scouts	1 company on Shyok River (later reinforced), rest facing eastern flank of the 121st Brigade
3rd Karakoram Scouts	Brachil Pass, central sector of the 121st Brigade
1 battery	6x 81mm mortars (for entire sector)
1 battery	3x 75mm guns (for entire sector)
Northern Scouts	1 or 2 companies
Gilgit Scouts	1 or 2 companies



(Map by Micky Hewitt)

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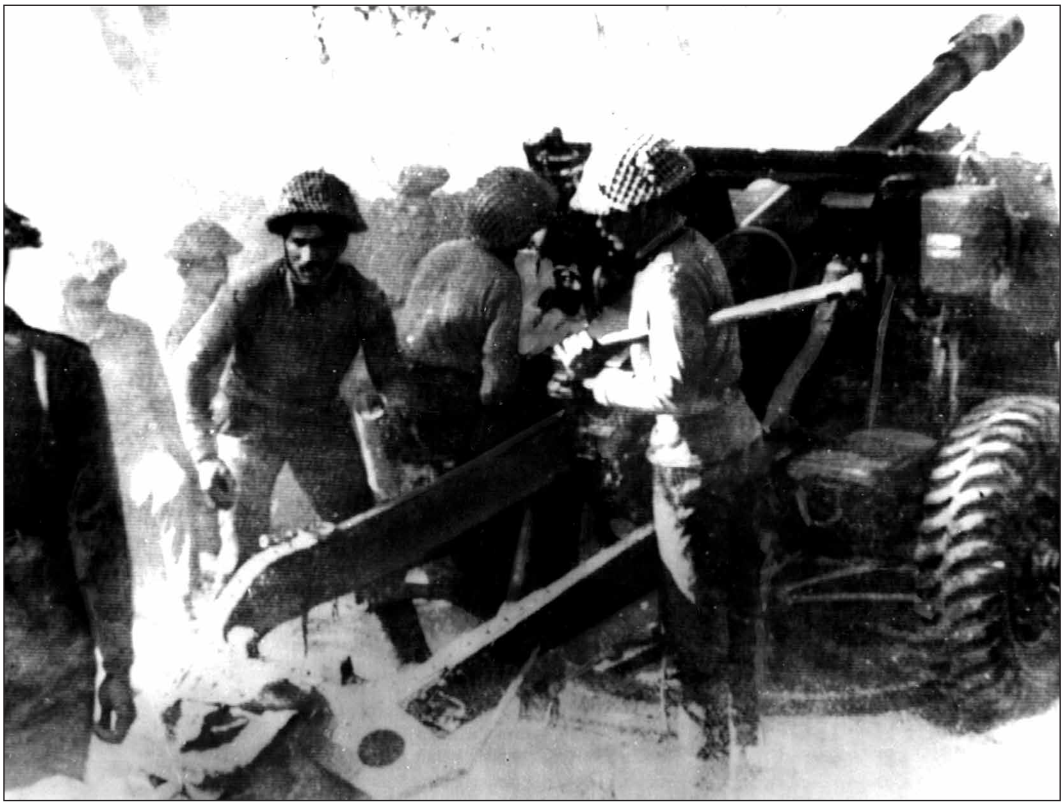
In 1971, guided anti-tank missiles were still a rarity both in India and Pakistan. Similarly, anti-materiel rifles were rare. Correspondingly, the principal anti-tank and fire support weapons employed by the infantry on both sides, were mortars and jeep-mounted recoilless rifles. The crew of this Indian operated M40 106mm recoilless rifle mounted on a Mahindra jeep was photographed while demonstrating its capability to use the local terrain and vegetation to itsadvantage. (Albert Grandolini collection)



Much of the Indian Army's artillery in 1971 still consisted of British-designed Ordnance QF 25-pdr field guns/howitzers. This 3.45-inch/87.6mm calibre weapon was originally developed in the late 1930s and was widely employed by Commonwealth forces throughout the Second World War and after. (Albert Grandolini collection)

snow, the deep-cut ravines, only animal transport was available, Indian troops had to fight their way upwards (usually under Pakistani observation) and that only 14 days were available, the short distance gained was unsurprising.

Sukhwant Singh has noted that perhaps the Shyok Valley thrust could have been better realised by taking the Chorbat La route. Nonetheless, the official history makes clear this was an ad hoc operation undertaken at Major Rimchen's initiative and thus there was no question of the Ladakh Scouts having been deployed via the alternative route. Sukhwant is also critical of Brigadier Whig's slow, deliberate, one-picquet after another approach. Sukhwant feels, correctly, that more bypassing could have resulted in a faster advance. Yet the Indian Army was not trained for manoeuvre operations in the mountains, so Sukhwant's criticism is irrelevant. Brigadier Whig's priority would have been protecting the flanks of his advance, which he could not have done if he was jumping past Pakistani posts.

Northern Gullies Sector

This sector was under the control of the HQ of 19th Division, Indian Army. It was also called the Border Security Force (BSF) Sector as India's deployment from west of the Zoji La Pass to Kel was protected by four BSF battalions and 1st Jammu and Kashmir Militia. Pakistan's deployment consisted of three wings of Northern Scouts and some detachments of 94mm (3.7" howitzers). This mountain artillery piece from the times of the First World War fired a 9.1kg shell over a maximum of 5,000 metres and had a very high angle of fire. When disassembled, it could be carried by eight mules; reportedly, a well-trained crew could have it unloaded, reassembled and ready to fire in two minutes.

The Sector's main concern was to prevent infiltration that might affect the Srinager-Zojila Pass Road, which continued east to Dras-Kargil-Leh. The sector itself had no roads worth mentioning; and snow reduced the possibility of infiltration. India managed to capture the meagre area of $177km^2$. A major positional victory by the BSF was the capture of Minimarg, 4km into Pakistan but India was on the defensive and did not exploit.

Due to the length of 19th Division's area of operations, this unit was assigned 15 regular and seven BSF battalions: the equivalent of two reinforced infantry divisions. India did not take advantage of its superiority because it would have meant leaving large swaths of the Cease Fire Line shorn of troops. Moreover, New Delhi never took any risks with Kashmir and the political/military order was that not one inch of ground was to be lost. This violated every principle of combat tactics.

Table 6: Western Kashmir, 19th Division Sector, Indian Army, December 1971	
Units	**Notes**
GOC 19th Infantry Division: Major General E. D'Souza; responsible for a frontline of 338km	
Northern Gullies	Tanghdar Sector (also known as the Tithwal Sector)
19th Artillery Brigade	Uri Sector; divisional artillery
104th Infantry Brigade	3rd Bihar, 6th Rajputana Rifles, 8th Rajputana Rifles, 9th Sikh, 1 battalion BSF
161st Infantry Brigade	Uri Sector; 2nd Assam, 2nd Maratha Light Infantry, 4th Rajputana Rifles, 5th Mahar, 7th Sikh Light Infantry, 8th Sikh
268th Infantry Brigade	held in reserve; 2nd Guards, 4th Mahar, 12th Grenadiers
Kilo Sector	ad hoc formations commanded by Brigadier A. T. Teixeira; deployed in Gulamarg-Kaurauli area (also known as the Kilo-Golf Sector); 2 BSF battalions, 8th Maratha Light Infantry under Lieutenant Colonel J. S. Lahe

Terrain Realities in North and North-West Kashmir

Military operations are shaped by terrain, but in the areas of 121st (I) Brigade and 19th Division, terrain was the dominating reality. Although the line-up appears impressive, 19th Division's 25km of front per regular battalion, was a sparse deployment. Except for 268th Brigade in reserve, there were no troops able to stage anything except feeble local offensives. As usual in the mountains, the bulk of the division held the picquet line in small posts.

Communications were thin; the closer to the Cease Fire Line, the thinner they became and the greater the reliance on mules and porters. This limited both logistic and artillery support. Building-up for offensives was time consuming and the forward-dumped supplies ran out within a few days, particularly if the Indians advanced. Also, snow fell along the higher reaches and soon spread along the whole Area of Responsibility (AOR). It was possible that India could have used its reserve brigade to put in a solid attack along one axis and won some ground however, he possibility was self-defeated by the 'not one inch' policy and the need to protect ground with as few gaps as possible, rather than close in and destroy the enemy.

A view at the Pahalgam Valley, with typical terrain of north-west Kashmir. (Photo by Kenny O.M.G.)

19th Division's terrain made lateral mobility nearly impossible except by foot and mule. To build-up for a brigade offensive would have taken weeks, in which period Pakistani commanders would have seen the build-up and moved to counter it. Whilst India had few helicopters – the bulk of these were in East Pakistan – Pakistan had even fewer.

India and Pakistan had been fortifying their positions since 1947. Defences on both sides were thick and layered. The Pakistanis defended the lower terrain and had interconnected their forward posts, giving them some lateral mobility. As a soft state, India was unable to levy a *corvee* of even 20,000 porters – if they could be found.[6] The area was thinly populated. Additionally, there was no provision to organise and supply them and high-altitude draught animals were scarce. India never thought ahead to organise more animal transport units.[7]

The same problem had occurred in 1962, when India lacked porters to move supplies and when the going got tough porters simply dropped their loads and fled. The Chinese not only drafted civilians, they used their army divisions to improve track and roads, and to manpack supplies.

Daylight attacks were out of the question, almost all of 19th Division's sectors were above the tree line and the slopes were rocky and bereft of natural cover. Defenders naturally manned the highest peaks in their area and attackers could be seen from kilometres away.

It was customary to hold intermediate features with a rifle section both to provide early warning and to delay the attackers. In most cases, peaks were held by a platoon and sometimes with a company, also backed by artillery. It was both costly and time consuming to seize these positions. The attacker's artillery was limited in all cases. Kargil 1999 was the first mountain war in which India had adequate artillery on the scale of two-three regiments per attacking brigade.[8] Otherwise, in 1971 the norm was

An Italian-made OTO Melara Mod 56 105mm howitzer of the Indian Army. The weapon was developed in the 1950s for mountain combat and 50 were purchased by India. Pakistan would also later buy the same weapon. (Albert Grandolini collection)

A column of Indian infantry navigating a steep slope. (Albert Grandolini collection)

four additional regiments per corps. Attacks, therefore, had to take place at night. Once into enemy-held ground, Indian troops had limited information on the terrain.

The air was rarefied and the number of hours men could carry heavy loads were limited. The weather was windy with biting cold, especially at night and the higher the Indians climbed, the colder it became and the less the oxygen available. Attacking uphill is never easy; at night, heavy casualties are to be expected. All in all, there was little that could be done in a short war.[9]

19th Division was disadvantaged from the start; it was ordered only to make small local attacks to improve security for the forward Indian posts by capturing the northern heights of the Lipa River valley, which runs east-west. Additionally, when the Indian offensive in the west was cancelled, GOC 19th Division was told he was to make no attacks without the explicit orders of higher HQs, in this case 15th AK with HQ at Srinagar,and Western Command with HQ normally in Simla but moved down to the plains for the war.

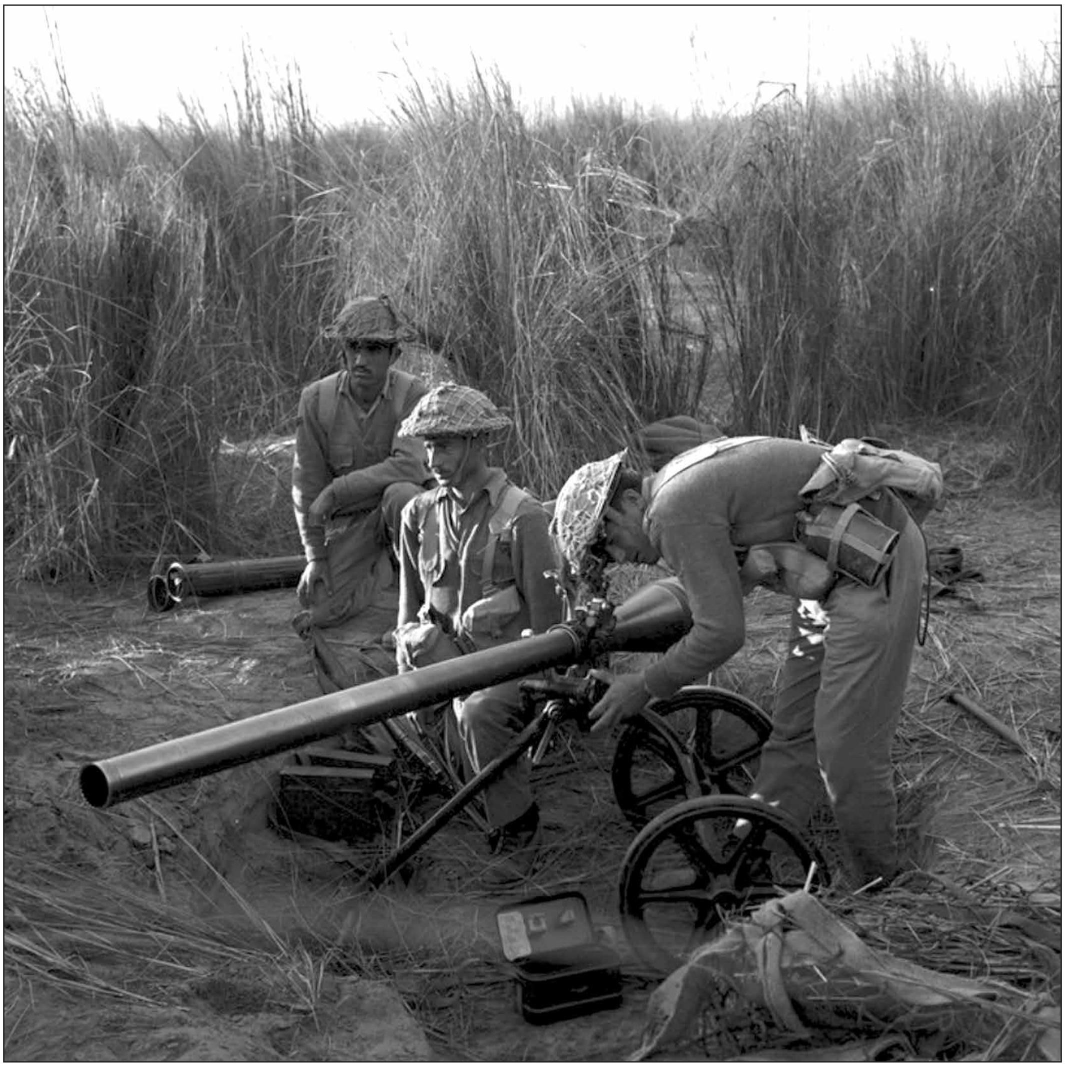
Pakistan was equally constrained for men and logistics on its side. It had an advantage in that its main line of communication ran through the plains and the climb to the forward positions was much easier than on the Indian side.

Tangdhar Sector

While India's Tangdhar sector was held by 104th Brigade with four regular battalions and one of the BSF, Pakistan's opposing 1st Azad Kashmir Brigade had three battalions of regular troops, four companies of Tochi Scouts, and two companies of Dafai Mujahids, giving near equality in numbers to the two sides. The Tochis were paramilitary troops; the Mujahids were local paramilitary embodied in wartime. Scout battalions were led by army officers and by September 1971, were reequipped as standard light infantry. 1st AK Brigade had four batteries with 105mm howitzers and one medium battery with 155mm howitzers in support. The official history notes that Pakistan's outposts in this area were strongly built and fortified and linked by communication trenches. Fortifications proved impervious to the Indian Army's 57mm rocket launchers and 106mm recoilless rifles and the only way to knock them out was by direct hits from mountain or medium guns.

104th Brigade had planned a local attack just south of the Tithwal bulge and just north of the Lipa River Valley. The first aimed at seizing positions in the west Lipa Valley at Ghasla Top and Ring contour, from which later offensives could be launched and which would block Pakistan from infiltrating north. 8th Rajputana Rifles sent in two companies; the other two may be presumed to have remained deployed on the piquet line. Pakistan's Tochi Scouts and Dafai Mujahids resisted fiercely until the Indian battalion commander launched his commando platoon (each Indian infantry battalion had one) from a rear position and the defence was overwhelmed. Pakistan suffered 20 KIA and 15 POWs; whereas India got away with just 8 KIA.

GOC 19th Division exploited his success by the Kaiyan Bowl. Pakistan's 2nd Frontier Force and 27th Azad Kashmir protected the heights north of the Lipa river. A third battalion, 16th AK (minus one company) was diverted to 26th Brigade in the attack on Punch. The company plus a platoon of Scouts faced 8th Rajput Rifles and 3rd Bihar. Indian fire support innovatively included two 5.5"



In addition to recoilless guns of US origin like the 106mm M40, by 1971, the infantry formations of the Pakistan Army were operating over 100 Chinese-made 75mm recoilless rifles. (Albert Grandolini collection)

medium guns which were broken down and brought by trucks into the area. The Pakistani force was heavily outnumbered and despite resisting strongly, did not stand a chance.

The Pakistanis, however, got their own back. As 8th Rajput continued its attack on the night of 8 December, again with two companies, it descended from the heights to Shisha Ladi and walked into a kill zone carefully prepared and manned by Pakistan's C/2 Frontier Force, Majid, and Scouts. The defenders held their fire until the attackers were 70 metres away before opening fire. Even when the other two companies of 8th Rajputs were committed, it made no difference and 37 Indian soldiers were killed, 69 wounded, and four missing.

3rd Bihar, on the Rajput's right flank (looking south) attacked heights in its area on 14 December. The defenders had one company of 16th Azad Kashmir and one platoon of Tochi Scouts. 104th Brigade's reserve battalion, 6th Rajputana Rifles, seems to have been kept in brigade reserve throughout. This time, thanks to some excellent shooting by Indian artillery which destroyed several Pakistani bunkers, the Biharis succeeded despite firm resistance from the defenders. Also, 3rd Bihar had the support of three commando platoons. The Pakistanis counter-attacked twice the next day but were defeated.

A similar operation to capture the east Lipa valley mountain tops was launched by 9th Sikhs through Tutimari Gali.[10] Aside from closing up on the Tithwal-Uri bulge, the object of controlling the gali was to block infiltration into the Kashmir Valley. The operation began with only two companies of 9th Sikhs supported by a 4.2" mortar battery, a token force without weight. The other two companies were deployed on the picquet line. Once the western operation was achieved, India sent in the two remaining companies of 9th Sikhs and the battalion steadily knocked off Pakistani picquets. Sukhwant Singh, based on Pakistani author Major General F.M. Khan's account of the war, estimates there were possibly two Scouts companies holding a wide front. 9th Sikhs' two remaining companies had been released to the battalion when another unit freed them from the picquet line.

A continuation of the offensive planned for 20 and 22 December was cancelled, when the ceasefire took effect at 2000 hours on 17 December. It can be seen that the Indian attacks were piecemeal and in limited strength. If the war had continued, Pakistan had its 2nd Frontier Force (three companies plus most of the fourth) and 27th Azad Kashmir battalions available. It can be assumed India's further progress would have been severely constrained.

A minor hiccup occurred at Tutimari Gali: after the ceasefire, a force of Pakistanis remained behind Indian positions.[11] The general commanding 19th Division was aware of this but did not report it to higher headquarters as he assumed he could clear it up quickly if needed. Meanwhile, Indian troops went to winter quarters. In a most enterprising fashion, Pakistan kept its forward detachment supplied through the winter snow by using the shadow of a ravine, both sides of which were held by India troops. Apparently, this was not detected by the Indians. With the arrival of spring in May 1972, the detachment's position was exposed and the GOC 19th Division attempted to negotiate a withdrawal of the Pakistanis. They refused, whereupon a hasty attack by a company of 2nd Guards – but without artillery support – was launched and failed. Pakistan then launched what might have been a two-battalion force at 9th Sikhs, the forwardmost Indian battalion; and, to quote Sukhwant Singh, 'pushed the Indian troops back in one blow'.[12] The GOC 19th Division faced enormous criticism because he did not inform HQ 15th AK of the presence of the pocket and because he lost ground gained by India.[13]

Uri Sector

The 161st Brigade sent two companies each from 8th Sikhs and 7th Sikh Light Infantry to seize small enclaves, which achieved

A Critique on Strategy in the Indian XV Corps Sector by Major General Joginder Singh[14]

It is strange that, once again, India overlooked or underestimated the enemy's intention with regard to Chhamb and did not reinforce this sector with additional troops, particularly with armour and artillery. With the depletion of Pakistan forces by three divisions, it had the opportunity of launching limited offensives and clearing up Pakistan Occupied Kashmir. A limited offensive from 25th Infantry Division's sector towards Mirpur, would have relieved pressure on Chhamb. The second possibility was to capture Kotli which is an important communication centre. This important area would have been part of Indian Kashmir at the end of the hostilities. XV Corps should have been reinforced with additional troops for offensive operations from 25th Infantry Division's sector. It would have created an additional confidence in the might of the Indian Army and dissidents in the Punch area would have not been so vociferous during the subsequent years. This reflects on the planning perceptions at HQ Western Command. The offensive into Shakargarh salient and Dagger, also known as the 'Chicken's Neck' reflects poor strategic perceptions and a lacklustre tactical performance. The high command did not seem to have grasped the implications sufficiently. It appears that the strategy and conduct of operations in the Western Sector were excessively decentralised for planning and its conduct.

Curiously, when Joginder was Brigadier General Staff to the army chief, then GOC XV Corps, he admiringly recalls Manekshaw's discussions on tactics and strategy, displaying his quick and deep grasp of the subject. Either Manekshaw was a show solider, adept at impressing all around with his personality or with charm, as he advanced up the hierarchy, he forgot tactics and strategy.[15]

Field Marshal Sam Hormusji Framji Jamshedji Manekshaw, Chief of Staff Indian Army in 1971, visiting troops of one the Gurkha Regiment's battalions in their forward positions in the Sialkot Sector. (Albert Grandolini collection)

little. Little is known about the four other battalions of the brigade though it is more sensible to assume that the rest of 161st Brigade was deployed defensively in case Pakistan's 80th Brigade attacked.[16]

Kilo-Gulmarg Sector

Nothing happened in this area and thus it can be said that the Indian Army wasted one of its infantry battalions. The two BSF battalions were perfectly adequate to meet any minor incursion, such as by one or two companies of Pakistan Scouts. It was likely known before the war that there was no worthwhile opposition and no danger. Again, however, since the order from the Army Headquarters (AHQ) was 'not an inch of our sacred territory', the GOC 19th Division had to be absolutely sure there was no threat.

Aside from Sukhwant Singh, who is meticulous about details, the Pakistani 80th Brigade does not appear on any ORBATs: it may not have been raised that early, although it does appear in Force Command Northern Areas, but only years later, as this was raised with two brigades at some point after the 1971 war (together with the 62nd at Skardu and 323rd at Dansam). If the 80th Brigade was not around, as seems likely, Indian intelligence could not pin down the location of Pakistan 7th Division, which was thought to be in northwest Kashmir which could be a reason inhibiting an Indian offensive. Using Occam's Razor – the simplest explanation is the best – since 19th Division was ordered on the defensive, an attack was not considered. 19th Division's straightening of the picquet line did serve a purpose and forced Pakistan's GOC 12th Division to send two infantry battalions to the Uri-Thangdar sectors, thus eliminating the possibility of a second offensive against Punch. This possibly saved the day for the Indian 93rd Brigade under 25th Division.

Table 7: Kilo-Gulmarg Sector, Indian and Pakistani Armies, ORBAT, December 1971[17]

Units	Notes
Indian Army	
25th Infantry Division	GOC Major-General Kundan Singh; responsible for a frontline of more than 300km
Division Troops	3rd Jammu and Kashmir Militia (from 33rd Brigade?), 7th Mahar, 14th Grenadiers
25th Artillery Brigade	divisional artillery
11th Field Regiment	attached to the 33rd Brigade from the 39th Division
34th Medium Regiment	
61st Field Regiment	
1861st Light Battery	120mm mortars
55th AA Regiment	minus one battery
93rd Infantry Brigade	Brigadier A. V. Natu; 6th Sikh, 8th Jat, 13th Mahar (from 33rd Brigade), 1/4th Gurkha Rifles, 11th Jammu and Kashmir Militia, 9th BSF, 50th BSF
120th Infantry Brigade	Brigadier Hari Singh; 21st Punjab, 9th Rajputana Rifles, 6/11th Gurkha Rifles, 14th Grenadiers (from 25th Division)
80th Infantry Brigade	4/9th Gurkha Rifles, 4th Garwal Rifles, 11th Rajputana Rifles, 5th Sikh Light Infantry

93rd Brigade and the Battle for Punch

The battle for Punch was important as it was a bold and well-planned attempt by Pakistan to unhinge the Indian defences west of the Pir Panjal and cut the road to points south including Surankote and Rajouri. It also shows in detail the difficulty of fighting in the mountains. Still further south, Pakistan's effort to seize Akhnoor was aimed at cutting the Surankote-Jammu road and could have led to a major disaster for India and the isolation of the Indian XV Corps with its 10th, 15th, and 19th Divisions. This would not have made up for the loss of East Bengal but it would have been a major victory for Pakistan. Although the history books do not say so, the battle showed the very staunch defence put up by 6th Sikhs. It confirmed the traditional cliché about Sikh troops; fierce but quickly exhausted in the attack but immovable in the defence. Further south at Chhamb, 5th Sikhs, though defeated, put up an equally staunch defence.

Apparently, one battalion of the reinforcing 33rd Brigade was at Krishna Ghati but again, no history tells where this place is. This makes any intelligent evaluation of the battle difficult.[18]

Indian forces in Punch were divided between three sectors:

- Gulpur, west of Betal Nala, 1/4th Grenadiers
- Banwat, east of Betal Nadi to Dorungli Nala, 6th Sikhs and 8th Jats
- Doda, east of Dorungli Nala, 11th Jammu and Kashmir Militia

Furthermore, 9th BSF battalion was near the vital Thanapir Bridge, over which ran the south road to Mendhar and Surankote. Loss of the bridge would have isolated 93rd Brigade from the rest of its division. A second BSF battalion, 50th, was also assigned to the brigade, but its location is not clear. Moreover, units were shifted as needed before, during and after the battle. Although there is no specific mention, it can be assumed that 8th Jats was the brigade reserve. A 'Nala' is a drain and during rains and snow melt, the three nalas would have been overflow streams during this conditions. At this time, they were likely dry: Punch sector was about 1,000 metres high, with the surrounding mountains reaching up to 1,800 metres.

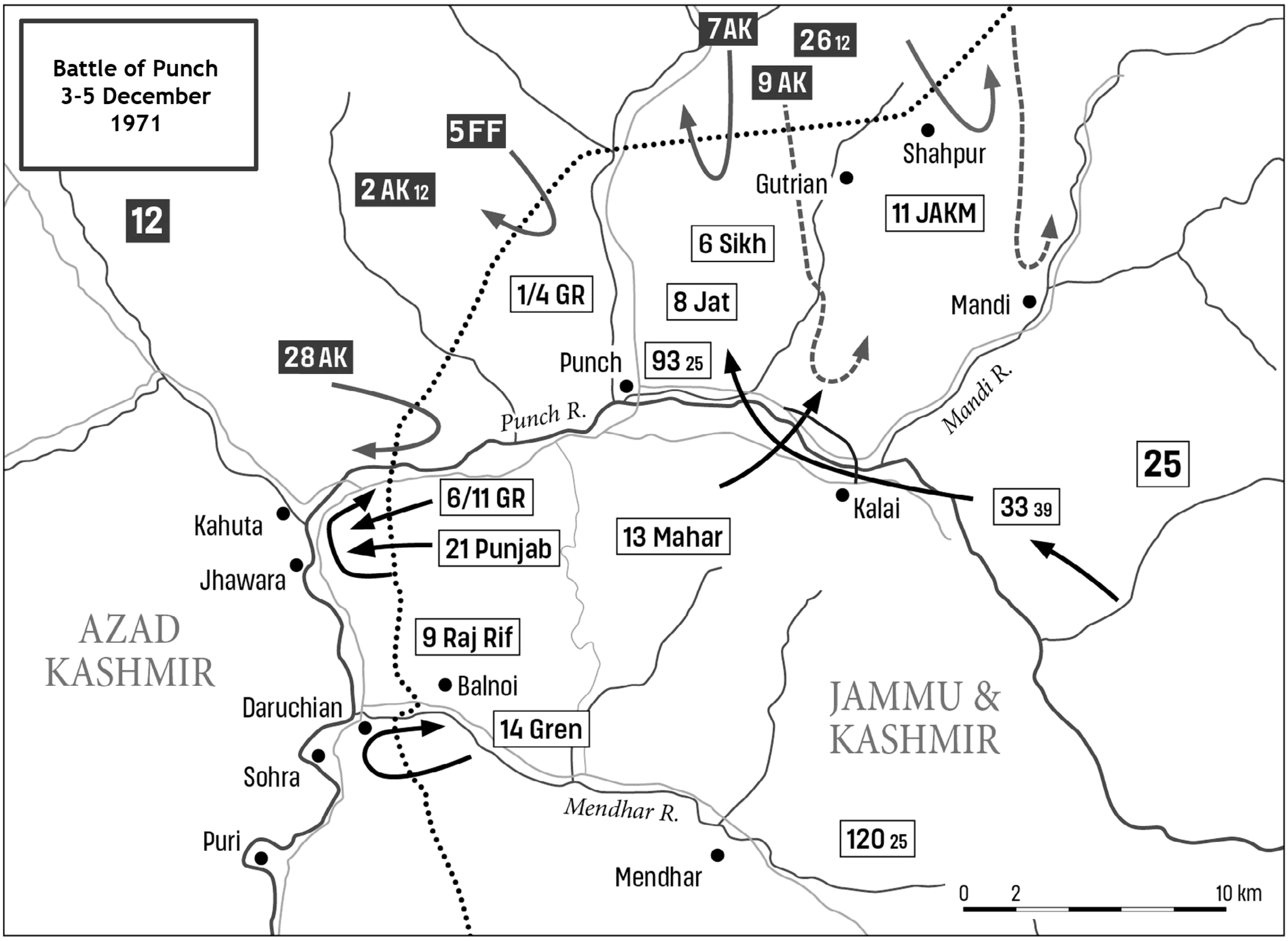
The despatch of three battalions (33rd Brigade, ex-39th Division of I Corps) to reinforce the Punch sector came about due to an intelligence error. Reports came of men in the Kahuta (Pakistan) area west of Punch with Pakistan 7th Division insignia. The extra brigade, which brought 93rd Brigade to a strength of seven regular and two BSF battalions, is usually attributed to saving Punch from falling to Pakistan; as seen later, this may or may not be true. One reinforcement battalion, 13th Mahar, was placed on the south bank of the Punch River behind 6th Sikhs and 11th Jammu and Kashmir Militia. A second battalion, 3rd Jammu and Kashmir Militia, was arriving at the bridge and had advanced one company in the direction of Thanpir, and the rest were at or near, the Kalai bridge. There is no information on 33rd Brigade's third battalion.

Major General Akbar Khan, GOC Pakistan 12th Division had a plan to seize Punch that was bold, imaginative, thoroughly exercised in terrain similar to Punch and well-executed. Among his preparations was to improve the lateral road from Kahuta to opposite 6th Sikhs. This allowed him to move three medium and three field batteries into positions so the infantry along the entire front was covered by artillery. In all, he had about 14 batteries, a considerable concentration for the subcontinent. He trained his battalions in Chinese tactics of night infiltration.

His plain was to move on two axes, always providing artillery support for his troops, one through 6th Sikhs and the other through 11th Jammu and Kashmir Militia protecting the Indian right flank and breaking through the heavily defended but shallow crust. One thrust would isolate Punch, the other would cut the bridge over the Punch River at Kalai (south of Thanpir). This would isolate 93rd Brigade from its parent division. Akbar Khan would then push the remnants of 93rd Brigade against the Pir Panjal range, giving him the opportunity to turn south and outflank 25th Division and threaten 10th Division (Akhnur) on its western flank. 10th Division would be hit by the Pakistan Army's heaviest offensive of the war.

Three things went wrong for Pakistan's 12th Division:

- 6th Sikhs, backed by two platoons from 8th Jats, refused to budge.
- A company from 13th Mahar (ex-39th Division) was moved behind the Sikhs, protecting their right flank against infiltration.
- 11th Jammu and Kashmir Militia, although infiltrated, did not panic. Especially since 3rd Jammu and Kashmir Militia was protecting their right flank.



Map of the Battle of Punch, as fought 3-5 December 1971. (Map by Micky Hewitt)

On the Pakistani side, the 2nd AK and 26th Brigade had seven regular battalions but had planned for an opposition of only four battalions. In the mountains, seven versus four in battalions is not good odds, but a successful one-axis-attack is feasible with three battalions attacking one defending battalion and one each attacking the remaining three defending battalions, while keeping one battalion in reserve. For the two-axis attack planned by Pakistan, eight to four would have been better, allowing 3:1 against two axes, and one battalion each in reserve.

Even before the war began, a two-axis attack was risky for Pakistan. With India sending in three additional battalions, the overall ratio changed to 1:1 and the prospect of victory receded. Possibly Pakistan was unaware of the magnitude of the Indian reinforcement. Equally possible, with the usual Pakistani arrogance about the superiority of its Muslim troops – again India's Hindu troops – it would have attacked anyway.

Pakistan's 28th Azad Kashmir attacked the positions of 1/4th Gurkhas west of the Betal Nadi, which flows into the Punch River. As may be expected, it pinned down the sturdy Gurkhas, but nothing more. The main attack by 5th Frontier Force, 51st Punjab and 7th Azad Kashmir aimed at 6th Sikh positions between Forward Defence Localities 406A and 407 and achieved no breakthrough. 6th Sikh, seeing the Pakistani build-up opposite, built a hasty road to supply its forward defence positions and to permit reinforcement and medical evacuation. It also built several fallback positions with overhead protection. This is one of those rare exceptions where brigade and division did not mandate 'not one inch', allowing 6th Sikhs to absorb the Pakistani attack. This is such a routine and basic tactic that no one would comment upon it but for Indian commanders to permit an elastic defence, was almost unheard of.

Indian artillery made history when a field regiment, probably 11th Field (33rd Brigade), fired 12,500 rounds in support of 6th Sikhs. During Kargil 1999, artillery fired 250,000 rounds over the course of several weeks, including 9,000 in one day during the final, successful attack on Tiger Hill. This, however, was by several regiments.

Even had the attackers overrun 6th Sikhs, 8th Jat was waiting behind the Sikhs. Further to the east, Pakistan sent 9th and 26th Azad Kashmir through the Indian 11th Jammu and Kashmir Militia using night infiltration. The defenders fought off two assaults. They could not stop the infiltration but did not lose cohesion or retreat. Marching through the night, 9th Azad Kashmir almost reached the vital bridge; 26th AK captured Thanpir with two companies. This feature was held by only a platoon as India did not anticipate Pakistan would reach that far south. Accordingly, OC 93rd Brigade asked his counterpart at 33rd Brigade to send A and D Companies to clear elements of 9th AK which had reached the bridge. The assault started at 1500 hrs on 4 December and finished within two hours. The two companies were ordered to clear Thanpir the following day. The operation began at 0800 hrs and ended at 1800 hrs. 20 enemy KIA from 26th AK were recovered, including its commander and the commander of the artillery battery supporting it. Bringing artillery that far south was a small and un-noted achievement. The action was assisted by a BSF company, a company of 9th Parachute Commando

Herder Woman that Saved Punch?

There is the story of a local herder woman in her 40s who went to fetch fodder for her cattle.[19] Her village was near Thanpir. She saw smoke rising from temporary huts vacated for the winter. Curious, she crept up to a hut and though a chink, saw soldiers. Frightened she hastened home to tell her brother. In the usual Indian style of 'no good comes from getting involved in other people's business', he told her to remain quiet. She immediately went to the village head, who similarly told her not to stir trouble. She then headed to Mandi where a small detachment of the Indo Tibet Border Police was located. The post commander managed to get a person who spoke the local dialect; on hearing her story she was taken to the nearest 6th Sikh outpost.

Consequently, the Pakistani infiltrators were captured and in 1972, she was awarded the fourth highest civilian medal for service to the nation plus a significant cash award and a pension.[20]

There are two anomalies in the story. First, there was no Pakistani attack imminent on 13 December 1971. The author may mean 1 or 3 December; this would be intriguing because it would mean the Pakistanis had already infiltrated close to their objective. Second, the narrator speaks of the knee-deep snow in which the woman had to walk through at night, but there is no mention of the snow in any account of the Punch battle. At the same time, there are photographs of ankle-deep snow dating to the 1971 War in Punch in December,[21] but typically the snowfall for the month is only 10 centimetres and easily traversed.

and artillery support from 11th Field Regiment. In their turn, the Pakistanis were not expecting a counter-attack against Thanpir and the Indians regained possession at 1800 hrs on 5 December. Still further east, India had 3rd Jammu and Kashmir Militia, so 26th AK and 9th AK were outflanked.

120th Brigade

Due to India's decision to stay on the defensive, only the failed attempt to seize Daruchian took place. A clean but minor action was an attack by a company from 9th Parachute Commando (6 officers and around 120 men) under Major C. M. Malhotra against a Pakistan Army 122mm battery, destroying all guns. The battery, located at Village Mandhol, 19km southwest of Punch was giving both 93rd and 120th Brigades trouble. Operation Mandhol was launched 13 December at 1730hrs (dusk).

The commandos crossed the Punch river where the freezing water ran at waist-level. The village was empty, but an old man showed the way to the guns. The men then split into six teams, each attacking one gun with explosives with pencil-timers. The attackers lost two killed and 20 wounded. The parachute commandos grabbed sleeping cots from the abandoned village for use as makeshift stretchers and set off uphill for their base, reaching it at 0630hrs on 14 December.

In 1971, the Indian Army had only two paracommando battalions. 10th Paracommando was desert specialised; 9th was mountain specialised, specifically for Kashmir. 9th Paracommando was the forerunner of the Indian special forces and was raised by a Guards officer, Megh Singh, demoted to major by a courts martial.[22] In the 1965 War, he offered to the GOC Western Command to raise an informal unit of about 80 Rajput officers and men to stage behind the lines raids in Kashmir. Fortunately, the GOC was the famous Harbaksh Singh, who immediately took up this offer. Other senior officers who knew Major Megh Singh responded to his requests for cooperation and material assistance. Drawing on his experience as a raider in Burma, Megh Singh led three commando raids into Pakistani-held territory (MEGHDOOT Force, a play on his name). Then in Chhamb, 50 ex-servicemen from the area volunteered for BADAL Force. In all, Megh Singh made seven raids. He was restored to Lieutenant Colonel by Lieutenant General Harbash Singh and ordered to raise 9th Parachute Commando, from which 10th Parachute Commando was raised.

Battle of Darachuian[23]

14th Grenadiers, the 25th Division's reserve battalion, attacked the Pakistan heights at Darachian with disastrous results. Nonetheless, the battle is of interest as there are many details, at least from the Indian side. It shows the difficulty of mountain night operations and how in war, things go wrong even with good troops. Sukhwant Singh recalled:

> Daruchian, [is] a feature blocking the Balnoi neck of the Kotli-Balnoi road between the Punch river and the ceasefire line. Daruchian is a conical feature, narrow and rugged at the top and with steep projections. It is forested on all sides except the southwest spur, which has a sparse growth of low scrub. This feature was reported to be held by less than one Pakistani company of regular troops and some Dafai Mujahids as part of the main picquet line. These troops were supported by two other picquets.

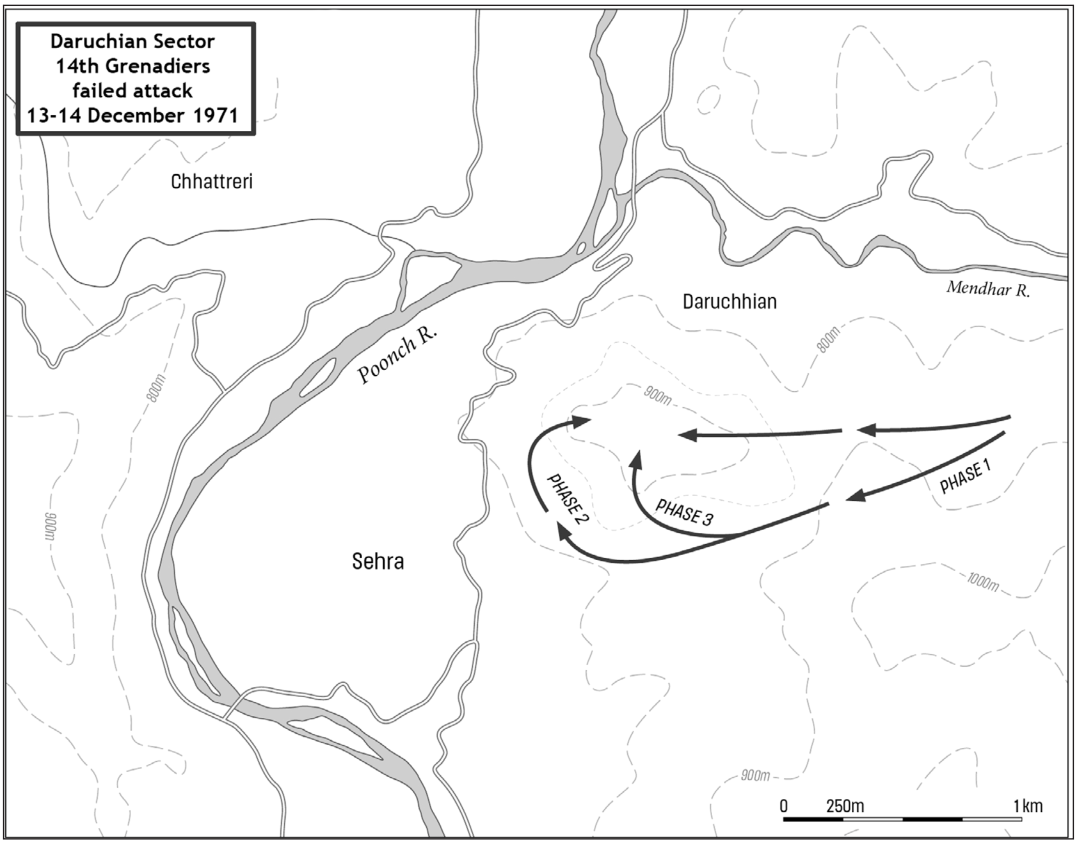
The other picquets were Three Stars to the north of Daruchian and Black Rock to its south. The Dafai Mujahids were a volunteer paramilitary force. HQ 120th Brigade thought the defences consisted of two platoons but in fact, it was a company reinforced, making five platoons. 14th Grenadiers had been earmarked for the task as early as October 23, when the division GOC personally briefed the OC, Inderjit Singh. The OC worked out a plan – presumably based on large scale maps – and it was approved by the division and brigade commanders. It seems odd that no further discussion took place until suddenly on 11 December, Inderjit Singh was informed the attack was scheduled for 13 December.

The Grenadiers had B Company and commando platoon of 6/11th Gurkha Rifles attached and four artillery batteries to support. Additional platoons were assigned as stops (to use the Indian Army term synonymous with blocks). A platoon of 7th Mahar was below Black Rock – and there is no mention of 7th Mahar in the histories; a platoon of 6/11th Gurkha Rifles was at Three Stars. The purpose was to stop Pakistani forces at Three Stars/Black Rock from interfering with the attack. With 16 platoons to two, plus the two blocking platoons, the Grenadiers should have had a relatively easy battle.

OC Lieutenant Colonel Inderjit Singh's plan, as approved several weeks previous, envisaged a three-sided attack, an innovative tactic. His men were well-trained and he had complete confidence in his troops. The first problem arose when his brigade commander refused to allow Inderjit Singh an extra day for reconnaissance. The battalion had been used as a work detail for the 25th Division front and had been scattered on 31 tasks. At the time of the attack order, it was at four separate locations. It assembled on the late afternoon of 11 December and the brigade commander wanted an attack

Table 8: Time-Table of the Attack

Phase	Unit	Route	Time	Reserve	Block
Phase I	B Company	Eastern spur	H+4	A Company (less one platoon)	Commando Platoon 6/11th Gurka Rifles
Phase II	C Company	Western spur	H+6	One platoon from A Company	one platoon 7th Mahar
Phase III	D Company	South-west spur	H+8	B Company 6/11th GR	
FUP (a)	A Company (-)				



A map of the failed attack of the 120th Brigade on Daruchian. (Map by Micky Hewitt)

The principal medium machine gun of the Pakistan Army in 1971, was the German-designed and manufactured 7.62mm MG.3 general-purpose machine gun. An improved version of the famous MG.42 from the Second World War, this weapon with a rate of fire of 800–950 rounds per minute, was manufactured under licence by Pakistan Ordnance Factories. (Albert Grandolini collection)

on 13 December. He assured Inderjit Singh there were only two demoralised platoons with 40–50 defenders and the GOC Division had an offensive planned for the same day which required no delay by the Grenadiers. Inderjit Singh challenged his brigade commander as how he could know the defending strength. OC Brigade's reply did not convince Inderjit Singh but the brigade commander would not be gainsaid. It should be noted the OC was an unusual kind of officer; for his readiness to argue with his superiors, he was termed 'bull headed'.

On top of this, throughout his life Inderjit Singh had a superstitious phobia about 13 December being an unlucky date. After he asked for one more day for reconnaissance, understandably, the brigade commander had no time for superstitions and reiterated his order for an attack on 13 December and not the 14th. The brigade commander, perhaps hoping to shame Inderjit, told him to decide by 0900 hrs if he could conduct the attack or else the task would be given to 6/11th Gurkhas. Inderjit said if he could not reconnoitre, his situation would be no better at 0900, and brigade should assign the task to 6/11th Gurkhas. Contradicting himself, the brigade commander refused.

Earlier, on the night of 10–11 December, 21st Punjab, plus one company of 9th Rajputana Rifles, had seized three picquets to the south of the Punch River overlooking the Kotli Road at Madarpur (near Kathua) plus other heights. On John Gill's[24] map the area is marked as Nangi Tekri, which was one of the three picquets. Control of lateral roads is particularly important in the mountains.

H-Hour was to be determined by Inderjit Singh, as long as Daruchian was seized by 0800 hrs on 14 December. The two platoon blocks were intended to prevent Pakistan troops at Three Stars and Black Rock from interfering with the Indian attack. It is evident that the commander's plan was detailed and well thought out.

What Went Wrong?[25]

Foremost, the Pakistan position did not have two platoons: it had a company plus two platoons. Next, the Pakistani battalion commander happened to be visiting the pickets and could personally lead his men. The Pakistanis used airburst shells against the attacking companies, causing severe casualties. The Pakistani position was heavily fortified, including trenches built behind massive rocks; these proved impervious to Indian artillery and air attacks. The Pakistanis had arranged excellent fields of fire, many Indian attackers were hit by rifle and machine gun fire: 14th Grenadiers lost three of its four company commanders and in some cases, the seconds-in-command were also killed or wounded. Men ran out of ammunition and there was no way to resupply them. Was this a flaw in the plan, or had no provision been made for resupply because the attack was supposed to pose no problem?[26]

Indian counterbattery fire seemed to be ineffective; moreover, the five or six manned bunkers atop Daruchian were so close to each other that Indian artillery had to hold fire or else risk killing their own men. The air strikes were too few and too light for results: the Pakistani bunkers were too solidly built.

Indian troops waiting for a signal to continue their advance. (Albert Grandolini collection)

B Company

B Company was in its jump-off position at 2320 hours. OC 14th Grenadiers said he had the choice of waiting 40 minutes to escape his 13 December curse, but he was worried the men might be discovered. So, he ‘took a chance’ and ordered the company to attack at 2335. He wryly notes he now faced a double 13 jinx: 13 December and the digits in the attack time added up to 13.[27]

On B Company’s axis, the attackers advanced swiftly but had to go to ground 18 metres from the top. The defenders had mined their front and when the attackers took shelter in the defender’s fire trenches, these also turned out to be mined. The company lost its momentum and was ordered to stay where it was however, before this, soldiers had crawled up to bunkers to throw grenades and were cut down. OC 14th Grenadiers ordered the sole available 57mm RCL rocket launcher up on the B Company axis. Both members of the team were killed by mines as they crawled forward. Another soldier volunteered to crawl forward and get the RCL rockets which were with one of the dead men and he successfully brought back the rockets. Unfortunately, in one of those grisly incidents all too common on the battlefield, an artillery shell landed on him, killing him, igniting the RCL rockets and setting fire to the dry grass. This lit up the surrounding area, allowing the defenders to fire more accurately.

A subedar who was now Second-in-Command of B Company made a desperate charge against a bunker with some of his men; he was hit in the hand, but stopped his men from aiding him, urging them to continue the charge.[28] Near the bunker, he was killed by a shot to the head. The company commander, who was bleeding to death from a shattered foot suffered after stepping on a mine, tried to charge to the top of the Pakistani post; he and his 2nd lieutenant were both killed by shelling, ending B Company’s efforts. Although some of its men reached the top and fought hand-to-hand, in the end, the company’s efforts were in vain. The company commander’s last words were for his men to save themselves.

C Company

C Company with a platoon of A Company, attacked at 0100, 14 December. After just 46 minutes the company commander reported he had almost seized the objective. At 0210, he reported his men were on the top and were engaged in hand-to-had fighting. Inderjit Singh was ready to send D Company to reinforce this successful axis; the confident company commander said he did not need reinforcement.

However, the enemy was in no mood to surrender; it reinforced, counter-attacked and brought down heavy fire and shelling on C Company. In particular, a medium machine gun was cutting through C Company. A volunteer crawled up to throw a grenade, destroying the MMG, but as Inderjit Singh relates, he was never heard from again. C Company had to retreat 180 metres as there was no cover. At 0317, the company commander asked for direct fire from the lone 3.7” inch howitzer in position to do this. An hour of firing failed to silence the bunker. With C Company stalled, Inderjit Singh ordered D Company into the attack. The Pakistani forces managed to reinforce their positions and counter-attacked C Company at 0730 only to be thrown back. A second counter-attack at 0900hrs was also defeated.

D Company

D Company attacked at 0400hrs and advanced steadily. The company commander informed the battalion that he could see the lower bunkers and planned to make it to the top. At 0552, along with his platoon, he charged a machine gun bunker and although already hit, he threw grenades into it but was killed in the process. His company, now leaderless, kept trying to give him cover – presumably not knowing he was dead. They ran out of ammunition, with no resupply forthcoming, they were forced to withdraw. The company’s radioman and other soldiers were captured by the defenders, but they managed to break free and return.

A Company and CO 14th Grenadiers

Inderjit Singh had his command post north of the Mule Shed sat south of the Mendhar River; further south was the Three Stars picquet; with him was his reconnaissance group and a platoon of B Company 6/11th Gurkhas and the rest of the company was nearby. A Company was scattered on various tasks, While C and D companies continued fighting despite being stalled, Inderjit Singh moved out, aiming to reach either company as soon as possible and start another attack with B 6/11th Gurkhas. Enroute, daylight broke. At some point, two sections of the B 6/11th platoon with him vanished from the enemy's sight and made their way to their camp.

When Inderjit Singh, now out of ideas, asked his Brigade HQ for help, the commander ordered air and artillery strikes for 1115 hrs and smoke cover for Inderjit Singh's party. Brigade told Inderjit Singh to provide support for the attack by C Company and ordered C Company to charge and for Inderjit Singh to charge from his position to provide the support.

Inderjit fervently objected, saying the remains of C Company and his company would be massacred for lack of cover. Three times Brigade ordered him forward and twice Inderjit said he was not afraid for himself, but he did not want his men killed for no reason. He suggested he wait for dark before joining C Company. After the third order, Inderjit resigned himself to follow the order although he believed he and his men would be killed.

Ordering up B Company 6/11th GR, he found the rest of the company had also decided it was time to go home and quietly departed. Informing Brigade he had no one to attack with, he was told to return to base. He told his brigade CO there was no chance of daylight withdrawal. The remnants of 14th Grenadiers extricated themselves after dark. Brigade had ordered up a company from another battalion to reinforce Inderjit, but the battle ended before they could reach them. The Indian official historian is lavish with his praise for the Pakistani defenders, saying their position was strong and well prepared, and that they fought exceptionally well.[29]

The Gurkhas

Anyone familiar with the famed Gurkhas and their fighting prowess will be astonished that B Company 6/11th Gurka Rifles withdrew. The official history confines itself to laconically say that, 'he [Commander 120th Brigade] was informed that the Gurkha company was not with the Commanding Officer'.[30] The brigade cancelled the attack. Neither Sukhwant nor Inderjit has an explanation. In the absence of data, I am forced to speculate on this amazing incident.

The Gurkhas are big on trust. If they trust their commander, they will follow any order. If there is no trust, there are problems. Watching 14th Grenadiers' battle, where one company after another was chewed up to no effect, it is possible they did not trust Inderjit's competence. When Brigade ordered what the rest of 14th Grenadiers plus B Company 6/11th Gurkhas to make a charge that the battalion OC himself said was futile, the Gurkhas decided to rejoin their battalion. Gauging by a statement in the Official History (p. 325), 'The Gurkhas did not have rapport with the Grenadiers. Ideally only such additional troops should be assigned to a battalion as are akin to each other…' (from interview with Lieutenant General Kundan Singh) – there were issues between the Gurkhas, their commander, and the Grenadiers.

Table 9: 120th Brigade Casualties, December 1971 According to Various Sources[31]

Source	Killed	Wounded	POW	Missing	Total
Official History	25	19		75	119
Lieutenant Colonel Inderjit Singh	25	64	41	29	145
Sukhwant Singh					160~

The Absurdity of Military Life

Three junior commissioned officers from the mortar platoon returned from Daruchian without their rifles. Inderjit's officers told him that the soldiers returning had picked up other abandoned weapons so he could simply note that everyone returned with his rifle. No, said Inderjit, lying is wrong. He informed Brigade, which ordered a courts martial of the three soldiers, who each faced six years of rigorous imprisonment. Inderjit told the brigade and division commanders he would not comply. His men had done their best, he refused to impose any punishment. There was a lot of time and paper expended in the subsequent back-and-forth. Eventually the choice was to court martial Inderjit or turn a blind eye. The Brigade CO wisely turned a blind eye: Inderjit had a propensity for combativeness which created trouble. An adverse report on his performance during the battle led him to challenge his brigade, division, corps and army commanders until the report was changed to his satisfaction. Additionally, he managed to get his Grenadier battalion assigned to 3rd Division (Leh), well out of 25th Division's reach.

Critique

Obviously, without access to full details and the principals' memoirs, it is difficult to make a useful critique after reading the available material, however, it is possible to make some generalisations.

The shifting around of 14th Grenadier's troops, mainly for use as details, should have stopped no later than 30 November to allow the men to prepare for their attack. Inderjit had a valid complaint about not being given an extra day for reconnaissance and route marking. There is no indication why GOC 25th Division felt compelled to start his offensive without the extra day.

The brigade commander was responsible for the faulty information that at best, two Pakistani platoons were dug in on the top of the Daruchian feature, when two companies were present. Launching a hasty attack with five companies in the mountains when a minimum of six were required, was inconducive to success. Eventually, 120th Brigade shook loose one company – too late – for reinforcement. Meanwhile, the great bulk of the division was simply holding picquets. This faulty strategy went all the way up the civil leadership and its 'not one inch' order. Indian histories largely omit the failure.

The multi-axis attack was approved by Inderjit's superiors. To later say this was not a sound plan, is unfair. 14th Grenadiers would have overwhelmed the Pakistani positions within 3–4 hours if only two platoons were present. At the same time, Inderjit did not trust his brigade OC regarding the defender's strength. It can be argued that the ultimate responsibility for going forward was his.[32]

Sukhwant says Inderjit's three-axis attack left each axis to its own devices with its reserve of just one platoon. No axis could support another. Given the enemy's strength was three times greater than anticipated, a two-axis attack by two companies each is unlikely to have made a difference. The staggered timing of the attack is, once again, not something outsiders can judge; but also once again, brigade and division had approved the attack.

Sukhwant argues a definite point when he questions why the battalion OC and his reserve company were situated 3-hours night march from the battle. Had they been closer, would that have stopped B Company 6/11th GR from heading home?

Sukhwant's belief that with 'only' 160 men as casualties, the attacks could have been continued, is odd. All three approaches had proved deadly. As it was, each company made two attempts. It seems unlikely that continued attacks would have served any function other than generate additional casualties, especially given the company commanders and seconds-in-command were either dead or wounded. One company made it to 18 metres, another to 55 metres; the third made it to the top but could not prevail.[33]

Naushera and 80th Brigade

If there are a number of unknowns about operations of 120th Brigade, available reporting about 80th Brigade is nothing but confusing. Officially, the brigade included: 4/9th Gurkha Rifles, 4th Garhwal Rifles, 11th Rajputana Rifles and 5th Sikh Light Infantry.

However, the Western Army commander said that due to the length of its front and a salient in Pakistan the brigade had to protect, it was given six battalions.[34] Possible sources for the extra two battalions are Kilo-Golf Sector (Brigadier A. J. Texiara) which had been created in case Pakistan infiltrated the Kashmir Valley, or 268th Brigade, the division reserve.

Operations were conducted by a listless, limp-hand leadership at all levels, a basis which were certainly of no credit to a good brigade. On the 'not an inch' directive, the brigade had six battalions, there was sufficient force to launch a three-battalion offensive while still leaving three battalions on the defensive. The impression given by the very sparse accounts – the official history does not even mention 80th Brigade – is that there was general confusion about potential Pakistani intention and the brigade was forced into the strongest possible 'we don't want any risk' posture, i.e., ordered to sit and hold its positions. Five battalions were on the piquet line, and one in counter-penetration reserve. This evidence suggests that India missed many opportunities to make substantial gains in this area as the forces in Kashmir were ordered on the defensive.

4

BATTLE OF CHHAMB

The battle of Chhamb resulted in the highest casualties of any action in the 1971 War. India lost 1,300 KIA, WIA and MIA; Pakistan lost more because it attacked fixed Indian defences. Both sides made mistakes, some avoidable, some not; there are reasons for the errors, not least the capricious Lady Luck.

Tactical Importance of the Chhamb Salient

Chhamb was open to Pakistan from three sides: west, south, and the east for several kilometres. A passive defence as ordered was impossible. Chhamb lay on the route of the road junction of Akhnoor. From Akhnoor, Pakistan could turn north-west and undo Indian defences from Punch south to the plains. Or it could turn east and get behind Indian defences of the Pathankot to Jammu salient, cutting off all Kashmir.

India knew this but after 1947–48 did little. In the 1965 War, Pakistan used its 7th Division and armour to overrun Chhamb and almost capture Akhnoor. India counter-attacked in the Punjab, forcing Pakistan to withdraw. After the war, both countries handed back their conquests. India received Chhamb again but after the ceasefire, it had to give up possession of the Hajipur Pass salient, which was a major diplomatic error. In 1971, India was somewhat better placed. Its 191st Infantry Brigade was replaced by HQ 10th Division and the brigade subordinated to the higher formation. In 1965, the HQ had been in southern India as a skeleton organisation; in 1971, the division had a full complement of three infantry brigades, a tank regiment, an artillery brigade and all necessary support troops.

India, as always bumbling in diplomatic matters, after the 1965 War stuck to the 1947–48 UN supervised truce, which meant no additional troops could be brought into disputed Kashmir. The division HQ and much of its combat strength was located 100 kilometres east. Meanwhile, India had built a secondary road to Punch, but suffering from its usual lethargy, still had not replaced the old, rickety bridge across the Chenab River.[1] The bridge was a Class 18: could take AMX-13 tanks, but not T-54, which had to be crossed by ferry. The bridge could not even take a prime mover and medium gun; the prime movers were unhitched for the crossing and the medium guns pushed across the river by hand. Luckily in 1971, India had ample mobilisation time since it decided to support the March 1971 uprising in East Bengal.

India's Four Plans for the Defence of Chhamb

As of October 1971, India's plan remained the standard one used for many years. 191st Brigade's main line of resistance was 20km east of the river. On the west side, two composite forces – Papa and Quebec – were to screen a Pakistani attack, cause 'heavy casualties' and retire to the east across the Munawar Tawi. Papa and Quebec however, consisted only of an infantry battalion and two rifle companies and two T-54 tank squadrons – the usual under-sourcing of troops. How this numerically token force was to cause heavy casualties was not explained.

GOC 10th Division disagreed and pushed for 191st Brigade to be stationed west of the Tawi River. It took him the better part of a year to convince his superiors. This became the early October plan.

Then later in October, India changed its plan from the defensive-offensive – so beloved of the Indian Army, which handed over the initiative to the enemy – to a straight offensive plan. Two brigades would move into attack positions west of the river on D-2, knock holes in the Pakistani defence and 3rd (I) Armoured Brigade belonging to XV Corps would exploit. However, the armoured brigade was to remain east of the Chenab River so as not to arouse Pakistani suspicions and since medium tanks could not traverse the old Chenab River bridge, five days were required to ferry two of the three tank brigade to the west. The third regiment was already on the Chhamb battlefield. Another example of the Indian Army's 'neither here nor there' approach. The senior commanders liked this plan and Army HQ allotted extra troops for it.

India's failure was to not understand the difficulty of shifting over 400 tanks, APCs, guns and vehicles across the Chenab in five days. India wanted to keep the surprise, but there is no indication the Pakistanis were unaware of the threat.

On 1 December, the Chief of Army Staff (COAS) accompanied by a close civilian adviser of Mrs. Gandhi's, appeared to tell 10th Division the plan was cancelled due to geopolitical considerations; India did not want to be seen as the aggressor (even though seven Indian divisions were already fighting inside East Pakistan). A

A post-war view of a column of T-55 tanks of the Indian Army. Notable is the fake fume bore extractor on the gun tube, which served the purpose of enabling quick identification in combat; this was in order to prevent blue-on-blue incidents due to the Pakistani deployment of very similar, although Chinese-made, Type-59 tanks. (Albert Grandolini collection)

dismayed GOC 10th Division objected, and the COAS settled on another 'neither here nor there' compromise: 191th Brigade could assume a 'forward poise' giving the initiative to the enemy. 191st Brigade was not to give up an inch of Indian territory but if the opportunity allowed, the division could attack. Naturally none of this was clearly defined, it was possibly just the Chief's way of avoiding a conflict with the strong-minded and stubborn division commander.[2] As a result, 10th Division had to change its posture from offensive to defensive in 48-hours and this had fatal consequences. India expected only a brigade group plus elements of 8th (I) Armoured Brigade as the opposing force.

Competing Plans

Pakistan's plan was for 23rd Division to attack in force and seize Chhamb and then Akhnoor. By accident, in late 1971, the AHQ in Delhi changed the strategy to an offensive one with India striking first around 1 December:

- 10th Division to attack through Chhamb aiming for Tanda and then Gujrat. No phase II was publicly defined, but one possibility was outflanking Pakistan's 23rd Division in conjunction with an offensive by the Indian 25th Division, allowing India to seize south-eastern Pakistan Kashmir.
- 26th Division to advance to Sialkot, no Phase II was publicly identified, but the intent was to draw Pakistan's strike reserve to protect Indian 10th Division from a counter-offensive by Pakistan I Corps' 6th Armoured and 17th Infantry Divisions.
- 3rd (Independent) Armoured Brigade as reserve for the Chhamb Sector, pass through 10th Division and strike towards an unspecified deep objective.
- Indian I Corps to push west in the Sialkot Corridor, the hammer with which to pin Pakistan I Corps against the anvil of 26th Division.
- Option for 19th and 25th Divisions to attack south and west.

This would have outflanked Pakistan's defence of south-west Kashmir, forcing Pakistan's 12th and 23rd Divisions to retreat to the Punjab plains and allow India to seize West Kashmir.

In turn, the Pakistani Army planned for its 23rd Division to advance to the Tawi River, thereby threatening to disjoint any Indian offensive towards Sialkot or any attack to get behind Pakistan Occupied Kashmir. It was a defensive move, but not good enough for GOC Pakistan 23rd Division; the aggressive and courageous, Major General Iftikhar Januja. He was familiar with the battlefield (having commanded 6th Infantry Brigade of 7th Infantry Division in 1965 in Pakistan's Operation Grand Slam), and planned nothing less than to seize Akhnur and then advance further as opportunity offered. The strike element of Pakistan I Corps (6th Armoured and 17th Infantry Divisions, with 8th and 15th Infantry Divisions protecting the Sialkot Corridor) was in reserve against any Indian offensive in the Corridor.

What Went Wrong?

In my very first book, *Pakistan Rearmed* (1973) was ordered to stop printing and the type broken up by the Indian authorities simply because I said India had begun the 1971 War on 21–22 November in the east. By the time, Moscow accepted East Pakistan was lost to Pakistan and approved India's first plan, the seizure of a belt along the border, which would permit the declaration of an independent Bangladesh, which would then ask for overt Indian intervention. But the Soviets did not want Pakistan destroyed, leaving India to be master of South Asia and no need to involve the Soviets in the region. They forced cancellation of the western offensive. Nonetheless, by now there are plenty of memoirs that give that date, though people still hesitate to say Pakistan air attack 3 December 1971 was mounted because of India's planned attack. Without understanding this point, it is not possible to understand why India lost the Battle of Chaamb.

As mentioned earlier, at the very last moment, Mrs. Indira Gandhi cancelled the Indian 10th and 26th Division offensives for geopolitical reasons. The two divisions were to shift to the defence.

However, their commanders, the commander of the XV Corps and Western Army commander were determined to go on the offensive the minute war began. As a result, 10th Division was caught between an offensive and defensive posture and proved unable to execute either option efficiently. Unsurprisingly, it lost the sector west of the Tawi.

On Pakistan's side, after its first push to cross the Tawi River, it may be expected Pakistan's 23rd Division would regroup and resume the offensive. Instead, it miscalculated the very slow-moving Indian I Corps offensive westward and began withdrawing troops to meet this new 'threat'.

On India's side, north and north-west saw the worst effects of static, positional warfare. Barely a third of Indian battalions were actively involved at one time. It is true that the political orders were 'not one inch', but Eastern Command had no problem jettisoning Delhi's plan and going for Dacca, the Indian military, however, was wholly passive regarding the civil leadership.

As in 1965, Chhamb-Jaurian was the key to winning north-west Indian Kashmir because the road from Jammu to the north-west lay through Jaurian, which could be gained by seizing Chhamb. Also India's defences in the Pathankot-Jammu sector could be outflanked by the thrust to Jaurian turning east. Matters were not helped by India's failure to construct a bridge over the Ravi River, 24 years and two wars after independence in 1947. In 1971 the Aknoor-Rajouri road was less important because a new alternative road further back was available.

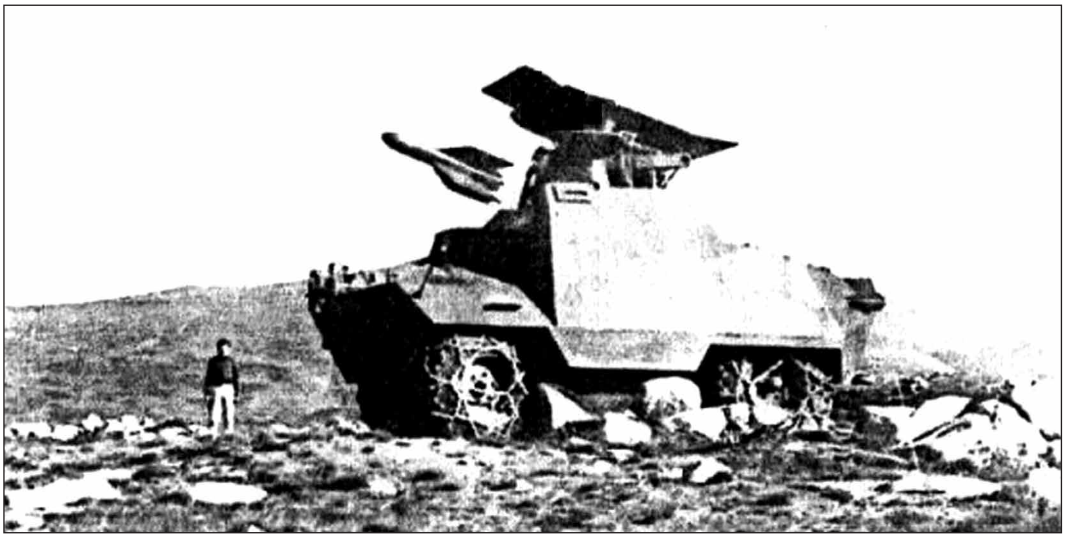
Due to the large number of brigades involved on both sides, the Chhamb battle cannot be easily described. India's side was held by 10th Division with four brigades. Pakistan attacked with 23rd Division reinforced by 12th Division, with five brigades. The generally given figure of six brigades is misleading, because it counts Pakistan's 7th AK Brigade, which was fully committed against the Indian 80th Infantry Brigade of 25th Infantry Division north of Chhamb. Ultimately, the Pakistani superiority was marginal.

Indian Army Forces

10th Division was to create a firm base on D-2 on the western side of the Tawi River with 191st Brigade. 28th Brigade was to hold the Hill Sector north of 191st Brigade, to prevent Pakistan from outflanking the firm base from the north and getting east of the Tawi. The west bank of the Tawi was held by covering troops in peacetime. 52nd Brigade with 3rd (Independent) Armoured Brigade was to attack towards Tanda through the firm base. The division was then to reorganise, with 191st Brigade coming up and the division striking for Gujrat, in the second phase. This would have allowed India to outflank Pakistan's defences of south-east Kashmir and open the way for deeper penetration of the Pakistani heartland. In November, the division was given a XV Corps reserve, 68th (I) Brigade, to permit an attack with two brigades abreast through the firm base.

India had 16 infantry battalions and two BSF battalions, two tank regiments, six artillery regiments (including two medium,

An emplaced Bofors L/60 40mm anti-aircraft gun of the Indian Army. The armies of both India and Pakistan army were critically short of such weapons, despite the Chinese supply of significant amounts of similar guns in 37mm calibre. (Albert Grandolini collection)



A rare photograph of a makeshift Indian tank-hunter; an armoured truck on a UNIMOG chassis equipped with French-made ENTAC anti-tank guided missile, seen during pre-war trials. The overall configuration is similar to that of the Soviet-built anti-tank missiles on the BRDM chassis. (Albert Grandolini collection) three field, and one light, equipped with 120mm mortars). It had 9th Deccan Horse as the divisional armoured regiment[3] and the 72nd Armoured Regiment (from the 3rd Independent Armoured Brigade).[4] Reinforcing Indian armour was 2nd Independent Armoured Squadron with AMX-13s; a reconnaissance unit drawn from the 3rd Independent Armoured Brigade. Two engineer regiments were available; the 61st was the divisional regiment and the 106th from the corps reserve. 139th Medium Regiment arrived from corps, along with one battery with 12 Bofors L/70 40mm anti-aircraft guns and one troop of six Bofors L/60 40mm guns. One company of 9th Parachute Commando was deployed to the Hill sector and B Company 12th Guards – equipped with French-made ENTAC anti-tank guided missiles – was available.

Pakistan Army Forces

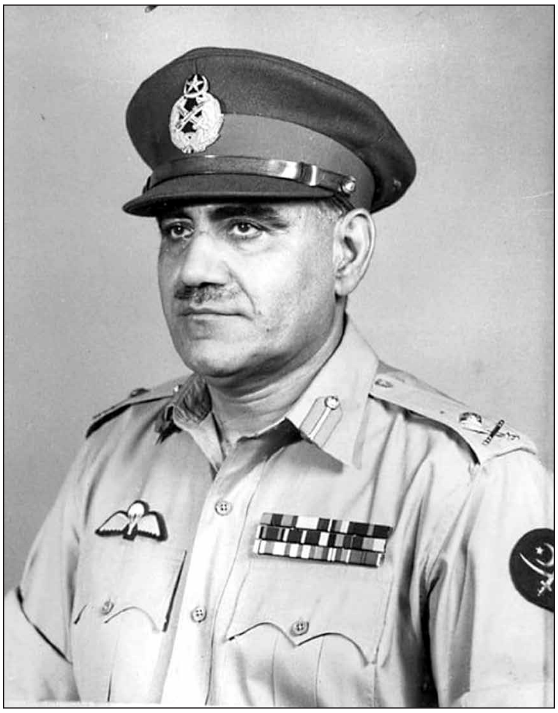
Pakistan's 23rd Division included the 4th AK Brigade (ex-12th Division) to attack the north Chhamb Sector, supported by units of the 2nd Armoured Brigade and the 11th Cavalry Group. This group was formed at the last minute as 66th Brigade (ex-17th Division) was too large to easily handle with its five battalions/regiments. 111th Independent Brigade, a reserve from Rawalpindi, was to attack straight east to the south of Chhamb. Meanwhile, 20th Infantry Brigade was to attack from south of the Chhamb Sector. Pakistan had 14 infantry battalions and three armoured regiments. One of the latter regiments however, had only 31 tanks in two squadrons; its third squadron had just two M47s and four lightly armoured M36 tank destroyers.

Pakistan's plan was bold, led by Major General Iftikhar Khan Janjua who was widely believed, on both sides, to be the best Pakistani general. GHQ had wanted the weight of the main attack to fall in the 111th Brigade area, where Pakistan had succeeded in 1965. He accepted 4th AK Brigade's terrain was rougher because of hills but India would be less likely to expect an attack. 23rd Division had 10 artillery regiments pooled from 23rd and 17th Divisions and from I Corps Artillery. Plus, it had three tank regiments and seven M36 tank destroyers, the latter grandly termed as the 12th (Independent) Tank Squadron. Pakistan had found the M36 unsatisfactory in the 1965 War but as it could not afford replacements, it was still in service.

Major General Jaswant Singh, Lieutenant General Sartaj Singh, and Lieutenant General Uni Candeth, the division, corps and army commanders respectively, wanted to immediately attack. Ironically, India's generals were routinely slammed for being too defensive minded. Here they were slammed for being too offensive.

On Pakistan's side, the death of the bold Major General Iftikhar Khan Janjua, GOC Pakistan 23rd Division was a grave setback. The statement is, however, without nuance.

> A) There are indications his troops were to seize the west bank of the Tawi River, which they did, but not – as the Indians assume – to proceed to capture Akhnoor. GOC Pakistan 23rd Division changed the plan to cross the Tawi and seize Palanwala, leaving the way to Jaurian-Akhnoor open. He did not define the next step.
>
> B) Facing the dreadfully slow advance westward by Indian I Corps, operating in the Sialkot salient, in an excess of caution, Pakistan's GHQ began withdrawing forces from 23rd Division to strengthen their defences south of Chhamb until 23rd Division was left with a single brigade facing the Indian 10th Division. Resumption of the offensive was impossible because GOC I Corps, who still had two tank regiments and one infantry brigade uncommitted, refused to move.



Major General Iftikhar Khan Janjua, widely perceived as the best general on either side of the 1971 War. (Albert Grandolini collection)

Table 10: Pakistan Army, Chhamb Sector, November 1971

Units	Notes
6th Armoured Division	Major General M. I. Karim
7th Armoured Brigade	
9th Armoured Brigade	
23rd Infantry Division	
11th Cavalry	Type-59s
24th Cavalry	Type-59s
25th Cavalry	Type-59s; probably including 51st Lancers
17th Infantry Division	Major-General R. D. Shamim
66th Infantry Brigade	detached to the 23rd Infantry Division until 10–12 December
77th Infantry Brigade	
88th Infantry Brigade	detached to the 10th Infantry Division

Indian Intelligence Failure[5]

In a booklet titled *The Indo-Pak War of 1971*, in a tacit admission of a failure of intelligence, Major General Inder Gill said: 'Although increase in build-up had been reported against Chhamb, there was no information of heavy movement or administrative build-up and hence an attack here had not been expected. Pakistan's attack on Chhamb took us by surprise.'

However, this was not all. In an interview with Melville de Mellow, even Lieutenant General Sartaj Singh – while giving his threat assessment south of the Pir Panjals – said about Punch that, 'Here we felt that if anywhere at all, it will be against Punch

A pair of brand new Type-59 main battle tanks of Chinese origin, seen shortly after their delivery to Pakistan in the late 1960s. The vehicle formed the backbone of Pakistan Army's Armoured Corps in December 1971. (Albert Grandolini collection)

A group of Pakistani armour officers in front of a Type-59 MBT, discussing the situation in the Chhamb Sector. (Albert Grandolini collection)

A patrol of the Indian Army, using a Mahindra jeep, seen along the border before the war. (Albert Grandolini collection)

[…] – principally because he had attacked in the Chhamb-Jaurian Akhnur last time, I felt that chances are that he would not do the same again.'[6]

Between 20 and 23 November 1971, 10th Infantry Division received two interesting visitors: Major General O. S. Kalkat – the military member of the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW or R and AW): the top foreign intelligence agency of India – and Lieutenant General D. K. Chandorkar, Head of the Directorate of Military Intelligence (DMI), respectively. Both were briefed on the operational plans in detail. They were most impressed and in fact, wished the GOC the best of luck, promising to meet him next in Pakistan. Both were in the business of intelligence gathering and if either of them had any idea about enemy build-up opposite the division, the 10th Division's plan would have surely been changed or modified.

At the divisional level, the commander relied on his tactical patrols, monitoring the enemy radio nets or the construction of 'observation towers' (which gave deep observation into enemy territory). Closer to the outbreak of hostilities, the forward patrols did report some movement of jeeps (perhaps officers on reconnaissance?), but this was discounted by the corps HQ. Both the commander 191st Brigade and CO 9th Parachute Commando were present at a briefing where GOC 10th Division brought out this information to XV Corps, who felt this was a ploy to wriggle out of the offensive. In fact, he used very harsh and abrasive words. OC 191st Brigade has written: 'At a subsequent planning conference at the corps HQ, GOC 10 Infantry Division revised his views about the disposition of Pakistani troops opposite Chhamb. However, he was accused of getting cold feet and wanting to call of the offensive.' He further writes that 'the Higher intelligence, particularly R and AW, actively aided and abetted this assessment …'

Major General O. P. Sbharwal (the then CO 9th Parachute Commando) later told the author that he was present at a briefing where GOC 10th Division mentioned the reports from his forward troops, but that the corps commander discounted these. Sabharwal recalled: 'Major General Sartaj was basically a bully and he did use the words "Since the war is getting closer you are getting yellow", and he refused to accept the latest intelligence of PAK build-up.'

It seems there was a complete lack of intelligence: indeed, even the RAW did not get wind of the large scale 'detachment of formations from the Pakistani I Corps' and their move to the sector of the 23rd Division. For example: 2nd Armoured Brigade (of the 6th Armoured Division), 66th Infantry Brigade (of the 17th Infantry Division), 17th Artillery Brigade (of the 17th Infantry Division), and 111th Infantry Brigade (the crack brigade from Rawalpindi). Admittedly, these moves were in depth areas but that is precisely the job of RAW. Even the DMI should have had its sources, but it failed; this was a failure of the highest level.

Indian 10th Division

The total size of the battlefield in the Chhamb Sector was about 200km^2: most of it 'decent tank country'. The north-western corner, although useful for tanks, was difficult terrain, cut by ravines and covered by three-metre-tall *sarkanda* grass, which greatly hampered visibility. Hills in the north-western and northern sector also enabled construction of strong points and observation posts. Further north and north-west, the battlefield was edged by the Kalidhar mountain range.

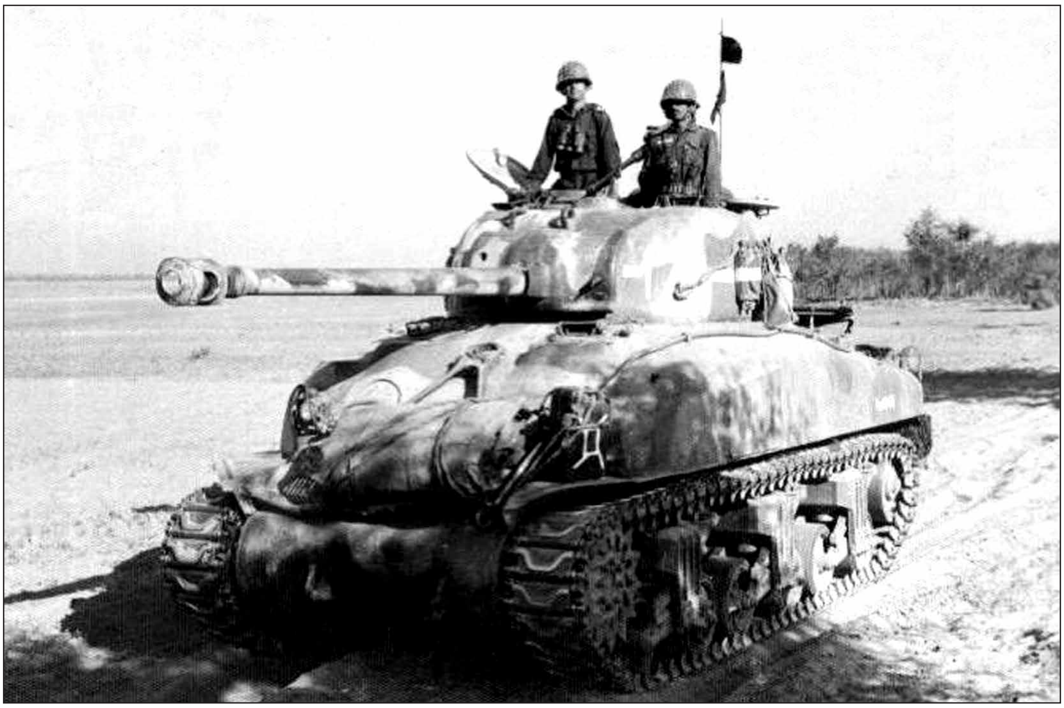
Table 11: 23rd Division, Pakistan Army, Chhamb Sector, December 1971

Units		Notes
23rd Infantry Division		Major-General Iftikar Juneja
23rd Divisional Artillery Brigade		Major-General Ghulam Ameer
24th Cavalry		Type-59s
25th Cavalry		Type-59s; probably including 51st Lancers
26th Cavalry		M4 Shermans and M36 Jacksons
2nd Independent Armoured Brigade	Brigadier Sarar Ahmad	newly established; from I Corps
	11th Cavalry	from 6th Armoured Division
	26th Cavalry (-)	24 M4 Shermans and 7 M36 Jacksons
	28th Cavalry	from 6th Armoured Division; equipped with Type-59s
20th Infantry Brigade	Brigadier Sayyed Zayir Hussein;	opposite 191st Infantry Brigade
	14th Punjab	
	17th FFR	
	11th Field Regiment	
	66th Infantry Brigade	Brigadier Qamur-us-Salam Khan
	4th Punjab	
	23rd Baloch	
	14th Punjab	
66th Infantry Brigade		from 17th Division
111th Infantry Brigade	Brigadier Nasser-ullah Khan Babur; replaced by Lieutenant Colonel S. K. Tressler (CO 42nd Punjab); replaced by Brigadier Abdullah Malik	from reserve of the I Corps
	3rd FFR	
	10th Baluch	
	42nd Punjab	newly established
	64th Medium Regiment	12x 155mm howitzers
	71st Mountain Regiment	12x 105mm howitzers
	Artillery Troop	3x 183mm guns
4th AK Brigade		including 1st, 4th, and 8th AK Battalions, 1st Zhob Militia Battalion (or 'Masoud' Battalion, according to some accounts)
7th AK Brigade		Brigadier Fazlur Raheem; deployed opposite Indian 25th Division
51st Composite Mountain Regiment		2 batteries of 105mm howitzers, 1 battery of 94mm howitzers
285th Locating Battery		6x 94mm howitzers
Mujahid Field Regiment		12x 76.2mm guns

Table 12: Composition of 33rd FFR, Pakistan Army, Chhamb Sector, December 1971

33rd FFR		newly established
	63rd Field Regiment	122mm howitzers
	28th Medium Regiment	M1 155mm guns
	B Squadron, 26th Cavalry	M4 Shermans
	11th Cavalry	Type-59s

A line-up of M4 Sherman tanks of the 26th Cavalry Regiment seen before the war in 1971. (Albert Grandolini collection)



A good example of an M4 Sherman of the 26th Cavalry, showing details of the camouflage pattern (usually applied as a grey colour atop of the originally green overall livery), turret markings (including the turret number 29) and the identification insignia (white horizontal line around the turret). (Albert Grandolini collection)

The town of Chaamb had a population of 10,000 and beyond it, the stretch of terrain to Akhnoor was again, good tank country. The principal issue was that the area was open at its western and southern side, and thus near impossible to hold. This explains why the Indian plan from 1965 – including a fighting withdrawal across the Tawi – was sound. An alternative would have been the offensive originally planned for 1971, although this proved incompatible with the 'not one inch' political order.

The difficulty faced by both Indian and Pakistani armour was the water table was high, and due to the winter rains, the flood plain of the Munawar Tawi (a tributary of the Chenab River) was wider than it otherwise might have been in drier months. Both sides' tanks got repeatedly bogged down, slowing the pace of battle. Should not have India, at least, been aware of the boggy areas? Sandhu says Indian route reconnaissance had been done during exercises, which would not have been in the wet period.

51st and 57th Battalions BSF were in the 10th Division sector. 51st BSF was in the Chhamb Sector and pulled back to defend the division administrative area at Akhnoor. Withdrawal of BSF units on opening of hostilities was standard operating procedure. It was thought that these paramilitary battalions could not hold in heavy combat, particularly as the bulk of the troops tended to be armed police. They were used to screen the front and to plug gaps when no regular troops were available.[7] 57th BSF Battalion was covering the Troti Heights as part of 191st Brigade. The wartime duties of the BSF were to assist the Army as required, including hold ground, provide border intelligence to the Army, combat enemy paramilitary/irregular forces, occupation duties, refugee control and to replenish Army manpower.

The key to what happened at Chhamb is Western Army Commander General K. P. Candeth's plan.[8] There are vague hints that GHQ would have been satisfied with pushing India east of the Tawi. GOC Pakistan 23rd Division, however, planned to capture Akhnoor with a single-minded focus. So much so that even after his helicopter crashed, leaving him with severe burns from which he died within 20 hours, he kept telling his commanders that Akhnoor had to be captured at all costs.

The Fatal Flaw

It is not adequately understood in India that the 10th Division plan assumed Pakistan would deploy only an infantry brigade and some armour. The Pakistanis, however, managed to slip in three more infantry brigades and the 2nd Independent Armoured Brigade without being detected – this was no mean feat. Thus, even had the political leadership not frozen 10th Division's offensive, the offensive would likely have had modest – if any – success. One reason for Pakistan's successful infiltration was that India had no surveillance access to most of Pakistan's deployment. GOC Indian 10th Division requested two high steel towers, one looking east and one south. He was refused on the grounds this would violate the 1948 Cease Fire

A 155mm M1 Long Tom gun of US origin being operated by the 28th Medium Regiment. (Albert Grandolini collection)

A Pakistan Army 155mm M114 towed howitzer seen during pre-war training. (Albert Grandolini collection)

agreementt. However, Pakistan had raised high towers on its side and when questioned, told the UN these were for civilian purposes which India accepted.

The appearance of these forces, in essence behind Pakistani lines, would have had the potential of unlocking the front, which had remained immovable since 1948. A. H. Amin, the Pakistani military historian, and backed by Sukhwant Singh, derides the Candeth plan as a fantasy. As Candeth made no mention of it in his memoir written after the war, there is no defence of the plan from his side. Another Indian shortcoming was that GOC XV Corps did not believe Pakistan would attack again in Chhamb as it did in 1965, he believed it would attack Punch: which it did as well as attacking Chhamb.[9]

At this point India committed a mistake. GOC-in-Chief Western Command extracted a promise from the COAS that he could go on the offensive once Pakistan attacked. The division, corps, and army commanders decided to attack as soon as possible and kept 191st Brigade in its offensive posture although its mission had changed to defence. When the protection of a thinly manned front is required and no good obstacles exist, obstacles must be created and mine belts are a standard obstacle. 191st Brigade's attack axis had been cleared of mines in preparation for offensive action; Pakistan did not know this and all its attacks were slowed by the fear that approaches to the Tawi and behind, remained mined. They were particularly worried about a minefield in the 5th Assam area which, when they learned was only a dummy, they pressed through and breached the defences. The defences had never been designed to hold for the 72 hours but they did due to the staunch defence put up by 5th Sikhs, 5th Assam and 8th Jammu and Kashmir Militia. As mining was done by hand and required extreme care, completely restoring the minefield in 48 hours was not an option, even had the Indian commanders wanted to switch to a fully defensive posture.

However, the Indian commander laboured under the 'not one inch' directive, which did not permit a withdrawal to absorb the Pakistani offensive. Also, the main road in the Chhamb Sector was classified as 9-ton and was in bad condition.[10]

A Type-59 of the Pakistani Army, lurking within the typical, three-metres tall *sarkanda* grass of the Chhamb Sector. (Albert Grandolini collection)

Indian tankers using their T-55 tank as an observation platform somewhere near the Munnawar Tawi River. (Albert Grandolini collection)

191st Brigade suffered heavily trying to hold the west bank of the Tawi and lost 200km^2, nevertheless, the 10th Division lost more men at Chhamb than anywhere else in the war. This was a pointless loss as no counter-offensive was mounted.

Outline Deployment

The 10th Division's northwest flank was held by 28th Brigade in the Hill sector (four battalions including one from 7th AK Brigade); 191st Brigade lay west of the Tawi River; 52nd Brigade was in reserve at Akhnoor (2 battalions); and 68th Brigade, the XV Corps reserve, was east of the Tawi River with four battalions including one from 52nd Brigade. The divisional tank regiment was 9th Horse, deployed with one squadron west of the river in four dispersed individual troops (three tanks each), with even the Squadron HQ of two tanks deployed separately. Later, the brand new 72nd Armoured Regiment, raised only six months previously, and 2nd Independent Armoured Reconnaissance Squadron (ex 3rd Independent Armoured Brigade) was also in the area. Together, this amounted to 16 battalions, plus two BSF battalions: the strength was equal to two divisions.

On Pakistan's side were 15 infantry battalions in five brigades. One of the battalions was temporarily loaned from Pakistan's 7th AK Brigade. One brigade faced the Indian 28th Brigade, three were against 191st Brigade. Pakistan's 2nd (I) Armoured Brigade was, in keeping with South Asian practice, scattered all over the place. Plus, Pakistan had three tank regiments against India's four squadrons (two of which were reinforced) and 10 artillery regiments pooled from I Corps, 17th, and 23rd Division artillery regiments, to India's six. As with all orders of battle, it needs to be kept in mind that this changed according to the needs of the tactical situation.

Sub-Sector Hill: Indian 28th Brigade

The 28th Brigade protected the Hill Sector and the bulk of its fighting was done by 8th Jammu and Kashmir Militia, which had the advantage of strong defences built up after the 1965 War. 2nd Jammu and Kashmir Rifles was on the boundary line with the Indian 25th Division, and 5th Rajput was in division reserve, sending one company to reinforce the threatened 8th Jammu and Kashmir Militia sector. The Jammu and Kashmir Militia was equipped on lighter scales than the regular army. Its ancestry lies with the Jammu and Kashmir State Forces before the state acceded to India in 1947. After the 1971 war, 8th Jammu and Kashmir Militia's performance was a key reason the regiment was regularised into the Indian Army as the Jammu and Kashmir Light Infantry. 9th Horse's Regimental HQ and a troop of the regiments were deployed forward of the Tawi.

Alhough many accounts describe Pakistan's battle opening with an attack by 4th AK Brigade, in the first phase it was 11th Cavalry Group that jumped off at first light on 4 December. The group was under command of 66th Brigade and consisted of 11th Cavalry (Type-59), a squadron from 26th Cavalry, 4th Punjab (infantry),

A Pakistan Army M4 Sherman – carrying infantry – in the Chhamb Sector during the war in December 1971. (Albert Grandolini collection)

Table 13: 10th Infantry Division, Indian Army, Chhamb Sector, December 1971

Units	Notes
10th Infantry Division	Major General Jaswant Singh
9th Horse	divisional regiment; Lieutenant Colonel (later Lieutenant General) H. N. Hoon; equipped with T-54s
10th Artillery Brigade	Brigadier Hari Srinivasan
12th Field Regiment	
18th Field Regiment	
56th Light Field Regiment	
81st Field Regiment	
39th Medium Regiment	Lieutenant Colonel (later Lieutenant General) Gowri Shanker
216th Medium Regiment	from XV Corps' artillery brigade
B Company, 9th Parachute Commando	three platoons
51st BSF Battalion	Colonel Harwant Singh (from 191st Brigade)
61st Engineer Regiment	
106th Engineer Regiment	
151st Air Defence Regiment	1 troop with 6x Bofors L/60
45th Air Defence Regiment	1 battery with 12x Bofors L/70
72nd Armoured Regiment	T-55s; detached from the 3rd Independent Armoured Brigade (Brigadier B.S. Irani), as reinforcement (the brigade's two other armoured regiments were assisting the 19th Brigade of the 26th Division in the Chicken Neck Sector)

one company of 19th Baluch (Reconnaissance and Support) and 24th Field Engineer Company. As noted earlier, the group was an off shoot from 66th Brigade as it made the brigade too bulky to handle. 11th Cavalry Group's object was to seize Mandiala Ridge and despite losses, it speedily reached the Tawi River as the Indians were not expecting an attack on that axis. A staunch defence by a company of 5th Sikhs blocked the Cavalry Group's advance at Mandiala. In addition, GHQ had no plans to cross the river, but GOC 23rd Division had a more aggressive plan – to reach Akhnoor.[12] The Pakistani attack was continued on his orders, but valuable time had been lost and Pakistan's position east of the river could not be held.

Pakistan's 4th AK Brigade, consisting of 2nd AK, 6th AK, 1st Zoab Militia, sent 2nd AK Battalion against 8th Jammu and Kashmir Militia's positions. 13th AK arrived on 2 December from 7th AK Brigade that lay north of 4th AK Brigade. It had two artillery regiments, one with 122mm howitzers and one with 25-prds (88mm). Armour consisted of HQ 26th Cavalry with two tanks and seven tank destroyers of 12th (I) Armoured Squadron, a total of nine tanks. Some reports give just four M36s, but the squadron commander's account says he had seven M36s.[13]

On the evening of 4 December, 4th AK Brigade followed up the Cavalry Group with 6th and 13th AK and 42nd Punjab (minus one company).

191st Brigade: 4/1st Gurkhas versus Pakistani 20th Brigade

Pakistan's 20th Brigade was to attack from the south, to pin down 4/1st Gurkhas and 10th Garhwal. It is the easiest sector to describe as nothing happened. The brigade included two infantry battalions: 14th Punjab and 17th Frontier Force. These were supported by 11th Field Regiment (25-pdrs), A Company of 26th Cavalry (M4 Shermans), 19th Baluch (R&S) (less two companies), one company ex-47th Punjab, and one company of the Pakistan Special Service Group (commandos).

20th Brigade in the south was to clear the Indian Advance Positions of Burejal, Bhusa and Mangotian, held by 4/1st Gurkhas. Once the main attack of 66th and 111th Brigade in the north had succeeded, the brigade was to advance northwards capturing all four company localities of the defending Indian battalion.

Generally, Indian battalions were deployed in four rifle company defensive posts, each with one of its three platoons as an advance position. One of the four rifle companies, fully deployed for all-round defence, was actually in reserve. 4/1st Gurkhas may appear to have been in a precarious position, faced as it was 14 companies, but to the east just across the Taw,i lay 10th Garhwal Rifles that could be used as a reserve for 191st Brigade.

Table 14: Balance of the Indian Army, Chhamb Sector, December 1971[11]

Units	Notes
191st Infantry Brigade	Brigadier (later Lieutenant General) R.K. Jasbir Singh; west of Tawi River
4/1st Gurkha Rifles	
5th Sikhs	Lieutenant Colonel P.K. Khanna
5th Assam	Lieutenant Colonel A.S. Malhi
10th Garhwal	Lieutenant Colonel Onkar Singh (KIA); Hill sector
28th Infantry Brigade	Brigadier M.V. Natu
5th Rajput	
2nd Jammu and Kashmir Rifles	
7th Jammu and Kashmir Rifles	
8th Jammu and Kashmir Militia	Lieutenant Colonel J. P. S. Randhawa
863rd Light Battery	from 86th Light Regiment
52nd Infantry Brigade	Brigadier K.K. Navyer; Akhnur sector
16th Punjab	Lieutenant Colonel Raghubir Singh
7th Garhwal	
57th BSF	deployed east of the Tawi River, in the Troti Heights area
68th Infantry Brigade	Brigadier R.T. Morlin; east of Tawi River
5/8th Gurkha Rifles	
3/4th Gurkha Rifles	detached from 52nd Brigade
7th Kumaon	
9th Jat	Lieutenant Colonel Jagjit Singh

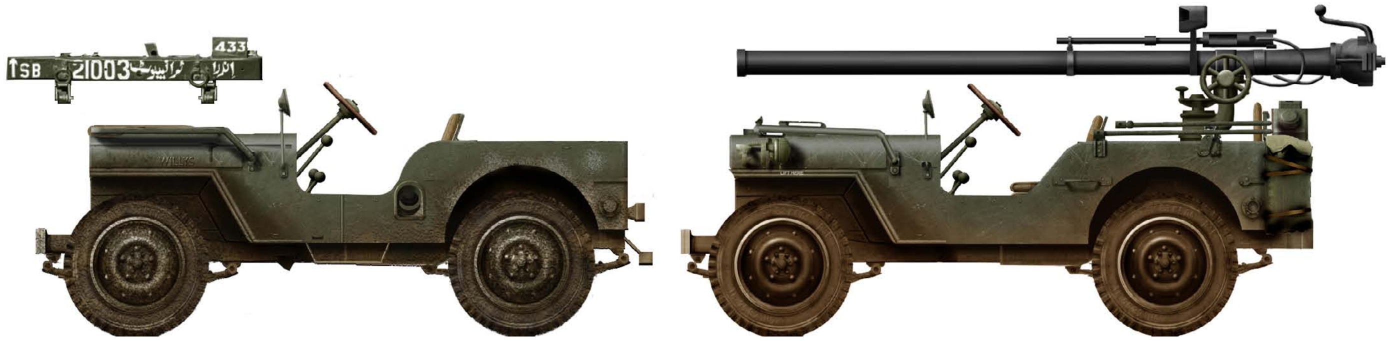
It can be reasonably argued that spreading out several battalions by companies all over the battlefield, was no way to deploy, however, recall that 191st Brigade was under a ‘not one inch’ mandate, which is a guarantee of losing ground. This shows again the lack of imagination of the Indian Army’s command. This brigade bore the bulk of the Pakistan assault and was defeated despite tough resistance.

106mm recoilless guns were the primary anti-tank weapon in infantry formations on both sides. This Indian example is seen inside a fortified position. However, no matter how promising on the paper, jeep-mounted recoilless guns proved no substitute for main battle tanks. (Albert Grandolini collection)

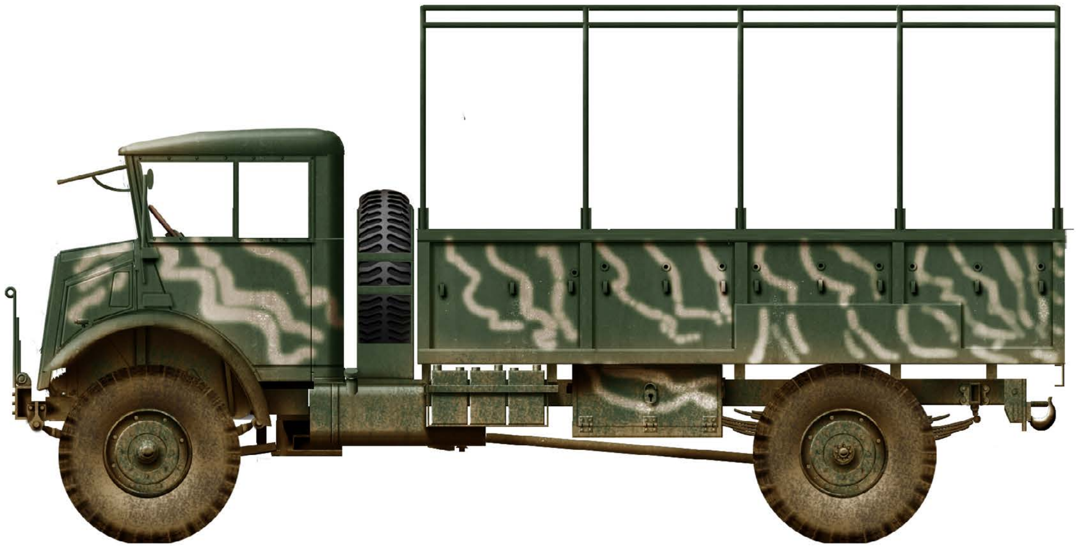
The brigade’s deployment followed the shape of a letter ‘L’. The top of the ‘L’ was held by 8th Jammu and Kashmir Militia of 28th Brigade, protecting Chhamb-Akhnoor’s north-west flank. The middle was held by 5th Sikhs and 5th Assam. The left corner of the ‘L’ was protected by 4/1st Gurkha Rifles. The bottom was held by 10th Garhwal Rifles east of the Tawi. The infamous dummy minefield was covered by 5th Assamand it was through here that 68th (I) Brigade was to attack westwards (Sandhu says there was a shortage of anti-tank mines). On Pakistan’s side, visualise 4th AK Brigade as arrayed against the 8th Jammu and Kashmir Militia sector, 66th Brigade against 5th Sikhs, 111th Brigade against 5th Assam and 20th Brigade against 4/1st Gurkhas. In terms of brigades, 191st Brigade had 68th and 52nd Brigades behind it on the east bank of the Munawar Tawi river, along the road to Akhnoor.

Sandhu notes that 5th Sikh had the strongest defences in the 191st Brigade sector in the Chhamb Salient. These defence works had been constructed over a period of time since they were the ‘Covering Troops’ battalion – prior to the ‘Forward Poise’, post-1 November 1971.[15] However, two other battalions had built up good defences after moving forward. All the companies had minefields in front of and between them. However, due to paucity of anti-tank mines, a dummy minefield gap in the 5th Assam sector was not yet covered. It was left open as 191st Brigade was to attack through the gap. When ordered to the defensive, the shortage of time and mines, meant the gap had not yet been covered.[16].

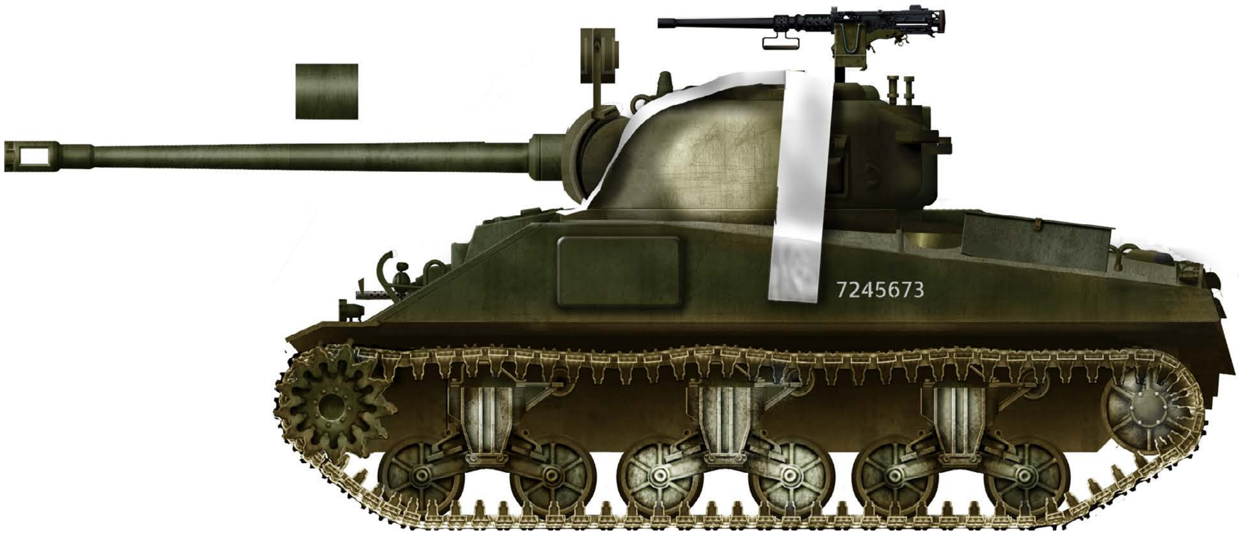
Pakistan succeeded in a stealthy build-up of its forces west of the Tawi, as well a stealth deployment of 20th Brigade. The Indian positions were endangered because HQ 10th Division dismissed reports of the build-up by field intelligence and civilian sources: the men in khaki uniforms reported moving around were actually Pakistani troops, not Indian BSF. Pakistan’s border field



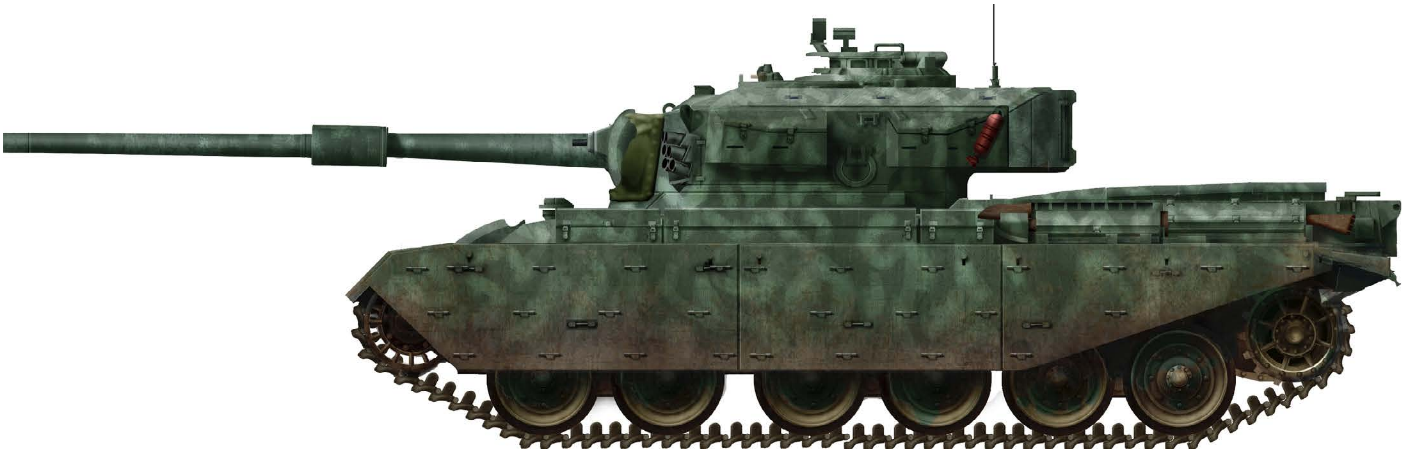
Founded as a steel trading company in late 1945, by the 1960s, Mahindra & Mahindra LRD established itself as the local manufacturer of light, general-purpose utility vehicles (colloquially 'Jeeps', from which the trademark was developed). Based on the design of the Willys CJ-3B or M606 (including a higher grille and a re-designed hood to clear the bigger Willys Hurricane engine), they became the primary military jeeps of the Indian Army. Thousands were in service as of 1971, usually serving for utility purposes in almost all of units, regardless their nature (left artwork). Heavy companies of Indian Army's units frequently deployed them as mounts for 106mm recoilless rifles (right artwork). (Artwork by David Bocquelet)



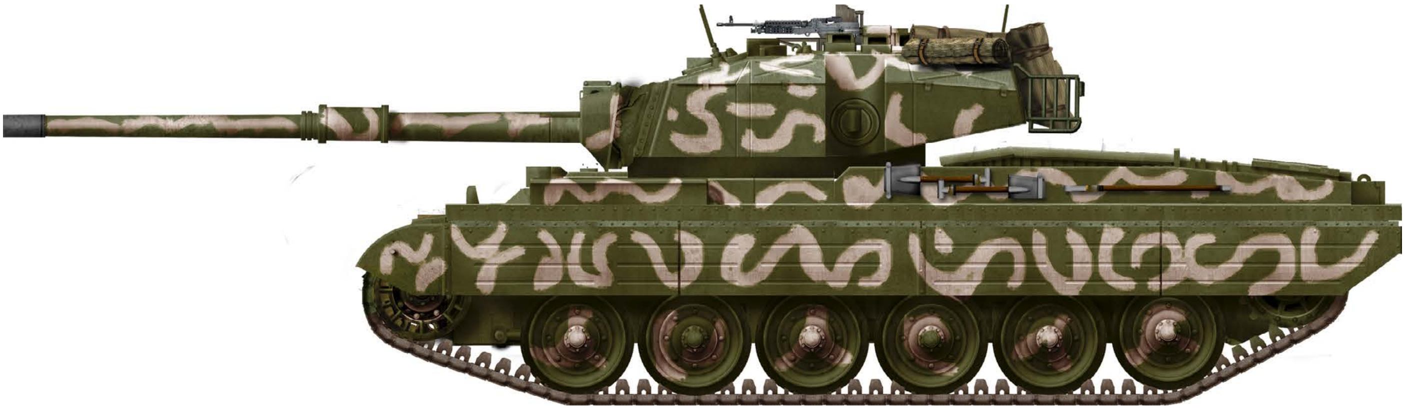
The Canadian Military Pattern (CMP) trucks were a large family of standardised military trucks patterned to British Army specifications and manufactured in huge series during the Second World War. India assembled around 9,500 of the LWB-variant (3-ton cargo capacity) from Canadian-made chassis and other parts. While some were re-manufactured as ACV-IP armoured scout cars, the majority served as medium trucks with the Indian Army; they had a 4x4 drive, the No. 13 cab and a cargo body, proved dependable and versatile and remained in service well into the 1980s. (Artwork by David Bocquelet)



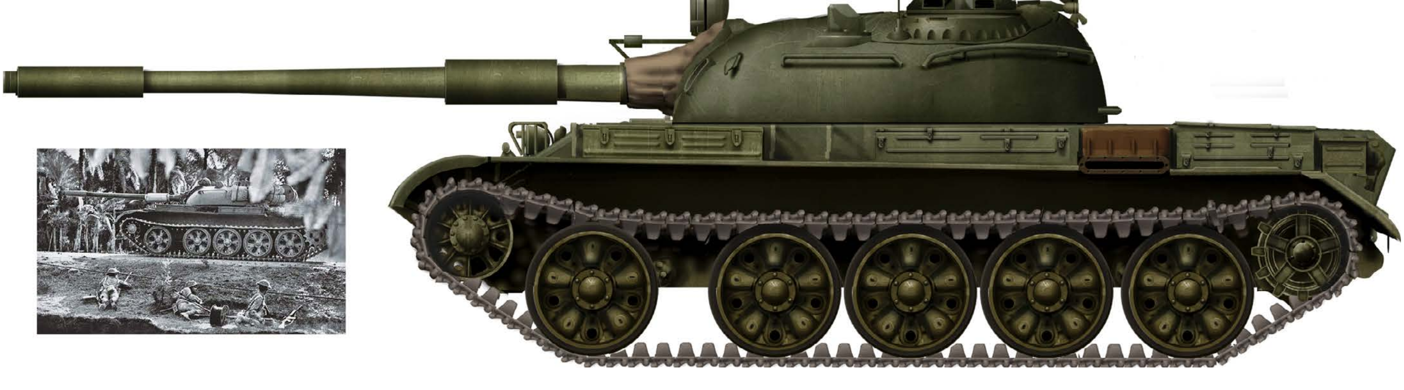
During the 1965 War between India and Pakistan, M4 Shermans of the Pakistani Army, modified through the installation of the M1A1/A1C/A2 76mm gun, proved superior to M4 Shermans of the Indian Army, armed with the old M3 75mm gun. Correspondingly, the Indian Army sought a solution through installing available tank guns of similar calibre from more recent tanks in its arsenals. One of modifications saw the installation of the D-56T 76.2mm gun, from PT-76 amphibious tanks of Soviet origin. Another resulted in mounting the SA.50 L/61 gun from the AMX-13/75 light tank, of French origin, (as shown here) on an example eventually captured by the Pakistanis. This tank also had a 'identification-barrel' attached to the gun tube, while the two long, white pieces of cloth were probably applied by the Pakistanis to prevent possible attacks by their air force. (Artwork by David Bocquelet)



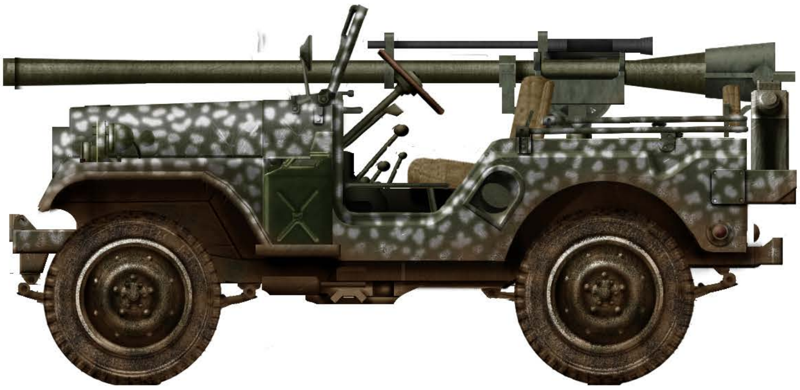
Although only 220 were acquired, the Centurion Mk 7 formed the backbone of India Army's armoured formations until supplanted by large numbers of Soviet-made T-54/55s, in the late 1960s. Four regiments were still equipped with them as of December 1971, each operating 45 on average. However, they were still armed with original 20-pdr guns and powered by Rolls-Royce Meteor engines. Generally, all were left painted in dark green, as on delivery: a few – including this example operated by an unknown regiment of the 10th Armoured Division – seem to have received disruptive camouflage patterns applied in light green or dark sand, 'in the field'. (Artwork by David Bocquelet)



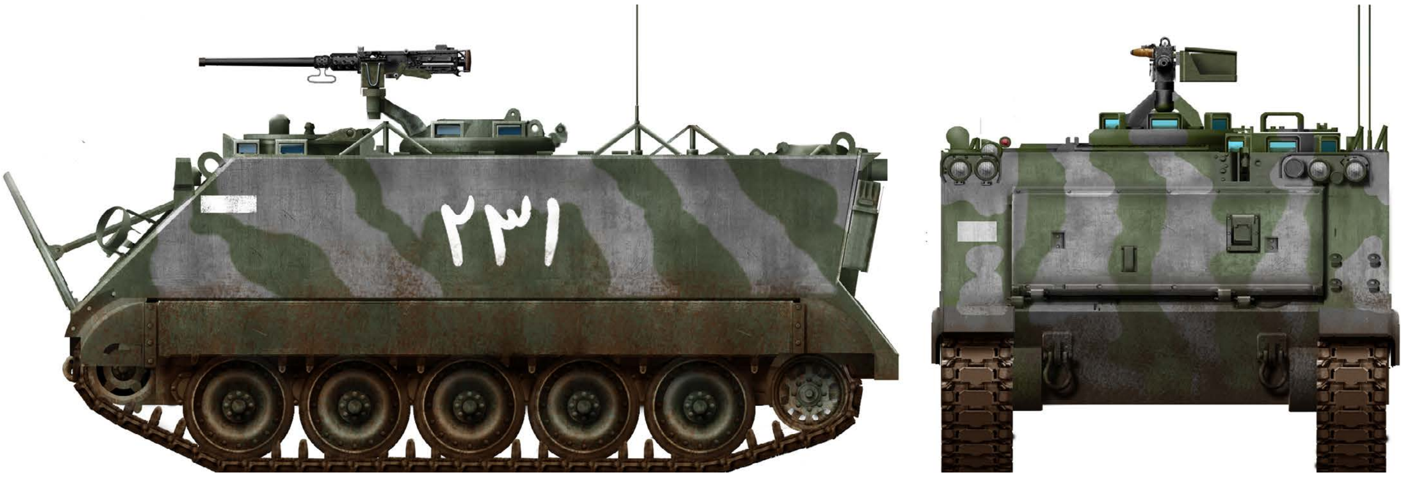
Designed as the Vickers Main Battle Tank Mark 1 in Great Britain, and manufactured under licence in India, the Vijayanta ('victorious') entered production in 1965. The first 90 were built by Vickers and shipped to India: the Heavy Vehicles Factory in Avadi launched production around the same time, initially mostly using British-made components. Eventually, India increasingly took over production until almost all components were manufactured locally and 2,200 were rolled out by 1983. With 80mm hull and turret front armour, the type was less well protected than Centurion, but lighter and more mobile and equipped with the excellent L7A2 105mm main gun stabilised in two axes. During the war with Pakistan in 1971, the Vijayanta excelled with its high rate of fire and precision. (Artwork by David Bocquelet)



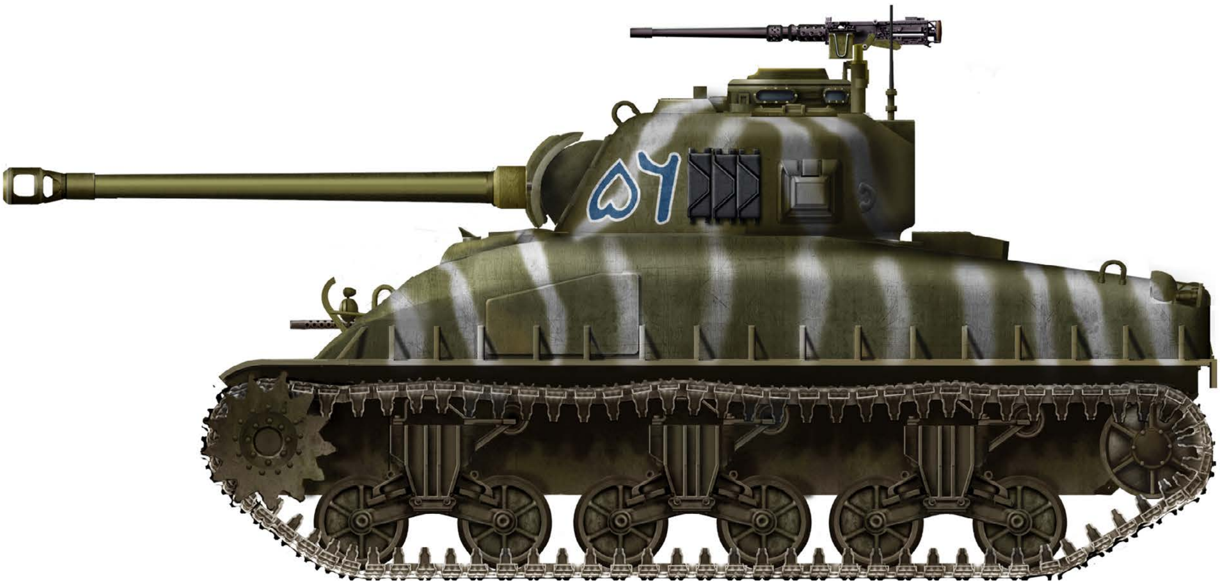
In a rush to bolster its armour and replace obsolete M4 Shermans after the War of 1965, the Indian Army began purchasing large numbers of T-54/55s from the Soviet Union. Eventually, New Delhi acquired a total of 1,219 in several batches. All were left in dark green overall and received no other modifications than fake fume extractors installed on gun tubes as the means of quick identification under combat conditions and to prevent their confusion with Pakistani-operated T-54s and Type-59s. The type proved highly-popular in the Indian Army, especially after the Battle of Nainakot, where T-55s of the 14 Cavalry Scinde Horse destroyed 9 Pakistani M47 and M48s without own losses. (Artwork by David Bocquelet)



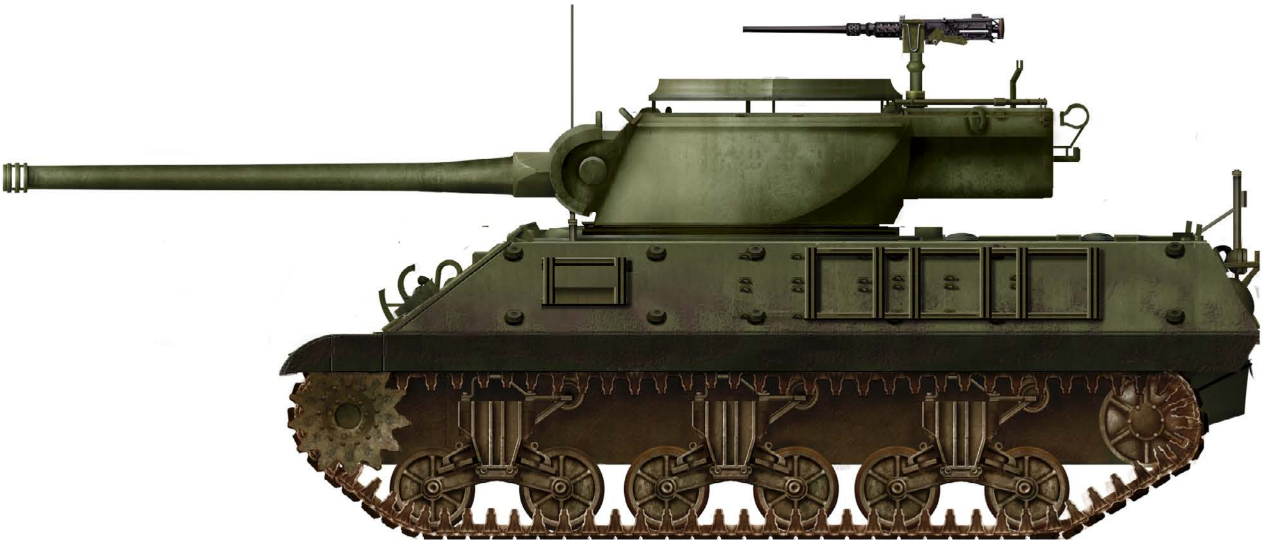
The primary utility vehicle of the Pakistani Army as of 1971 was still the US-made Willys MB jeep, hundreds of which were donated by the USA in the 1950s and 1960s. Each infantry battalion usually included a heavy weapons company, armed – between others – with a battery of three or four jeeps with air-cooled, breech-loaded, M40 106mm recoilless guns. The weapon was equipped for direct fire only and aimed with help of an affixed M8C 12.7mm spotting rifle, installed directly atop of the tube. (Artwork by David Bocquelet)



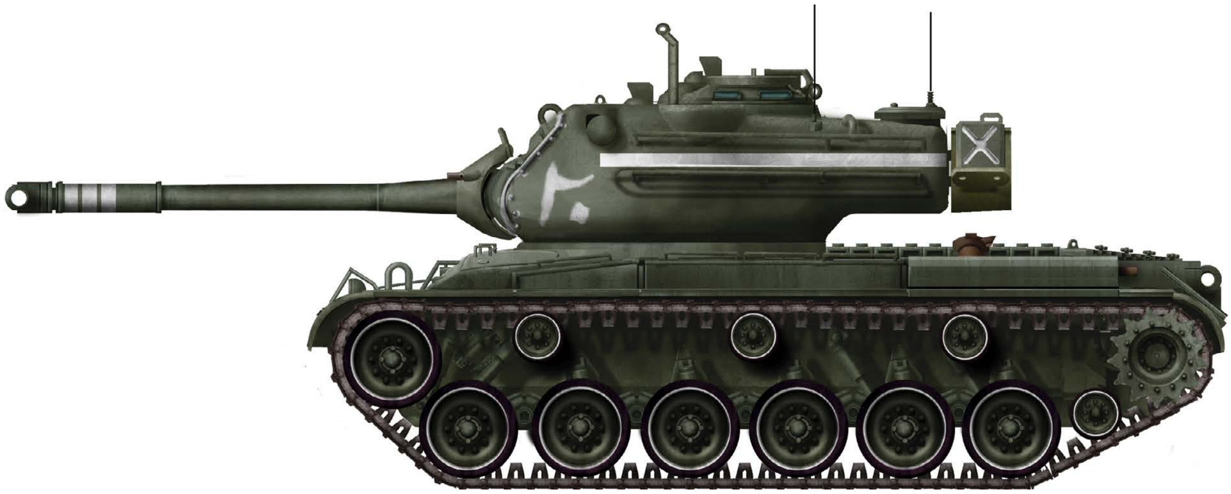
Mechanised formations were still a rarity in the Pakistani Army of 1971. Indeed, the majority of about 600 of M113A1 armoured personnel carriers donated to Pakistan by the USA in the late 1960s and early 1970s, went to different battalions of the Frontier Force Regiment. This example served with the 7th Battalion, Frontier Force Regiment, in the Chenab area of 1969. Atop of its Forest Green overall livery, applied prior to delivery, it received a disruptive camouflage pattern in grey, as usual for the Pakistan Army of this period. (Artwork by David Bocquelet)



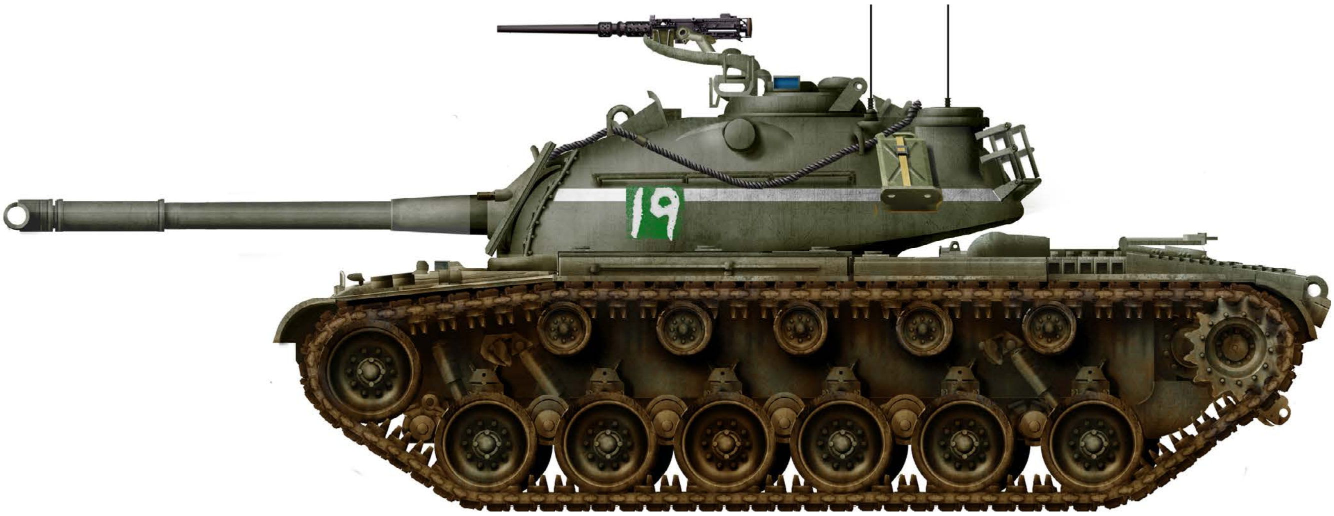
Perhaps the oldest medium tank still in service with the Pakistani Army as of 1971 was the venerable M4A1E6 Sherman. Six regiments were still equipped with them, and although they proved no match for Indian Centurions, Vijayantas and T-54/55, the Pakistanis often ran daring attacks with them. This example from the 13th Lancer is shown in typical livery of the times: with a disruptive pattern in dark grey atop of the original Forest Green. The turret number was usually applied in white, but sometimes in red or, like on this example: in blue. (Artwork by David Bocquelet)



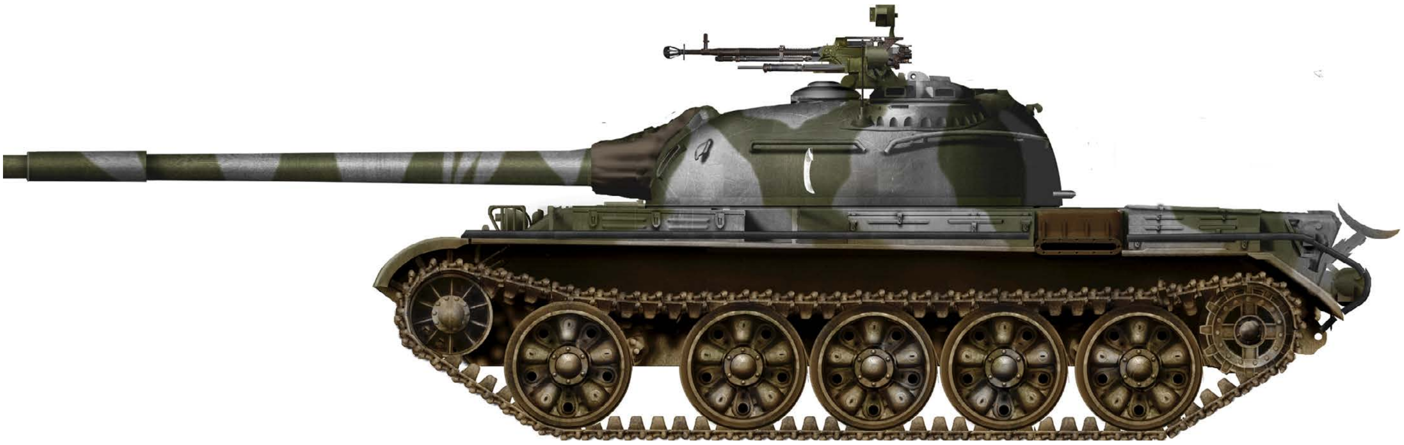
Lacking main battle tanks, in the run-up to the 1971 Indo-Pakistani War, the Pakistani Army pressed its surviving 40 M36B2 'tank hunters' armed with 90mm guns, into service again. Most were assigned to the 11th Independent Armoured Squadron, seven went to the 26th Cavalry (and thus in the Manto Force), deployed in the Chhamb Sector, where almost all were destroyed. The rest were operated by the 20th Lanzers in the Shakargarh Salient. The majority should have been left in their overall Forest Green, as on delivery, but – where there was an opportunity – some received disruptive camouflage patterns in grey or brown colours. (Artwork by David Bocquelet)



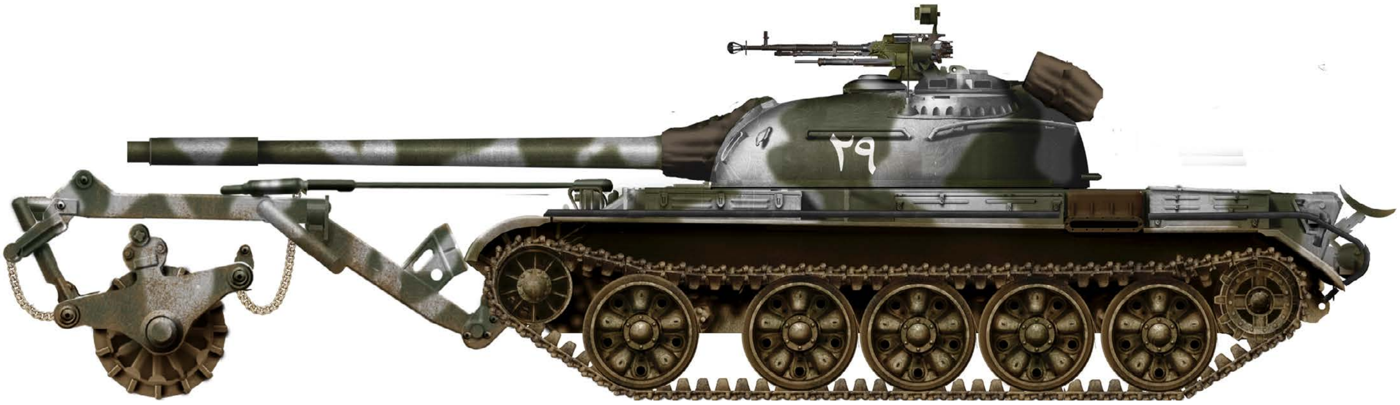
The unlucky M47 Patton-fleet of the Pakistani Army was already badly depleted during the 1965 War with India. Six years later, it was in poor technical condition but the lack of tanks forced the army to continue operating them. Meanwhile, many had received disruptive camouflage patterns in grey or light brown but this example was left in Forest Green overall until knocked out while serving with the 13th Lancers during the counterattack on the Basanter bridgehead, on 16 December 1971. As usual by the time, it wore a large turret number applied in white, with brush: in this case, it was 20. (Artwork by David Bocquelet)



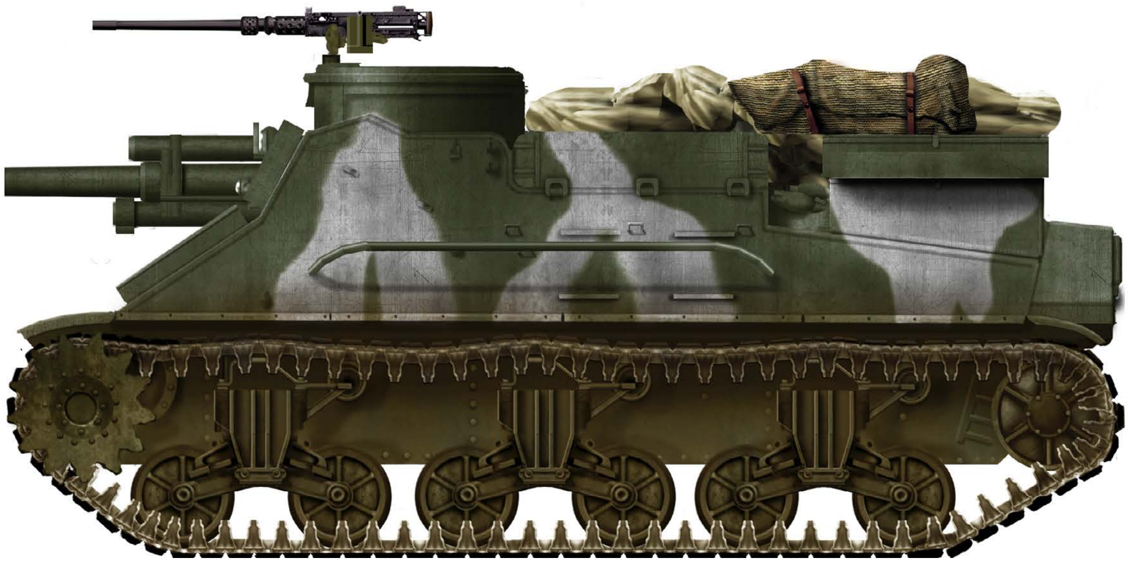
Only slightly more effective was the Pakistan's fleet of M48A1 Patton main battle tanks. Most were assigned to the 27th and 31st Cavalry Regiments, both of which were a part of the 8th Independent Armoured Brigade. While the crews of the 31st tended to apply turret numbers on their vehicles in much larger digits, this example from the 27th had its turret number applied on a green square, atop of the usual identification strip in white, applied around the turret. As in 1965, attrition of Pakistan's M48A1s in 1971 was significant – especially so during the ill-fated, 'last ditch' counterattack on the Basanter bridgehead, on 16 December. (Artwork by David Bocquelet)



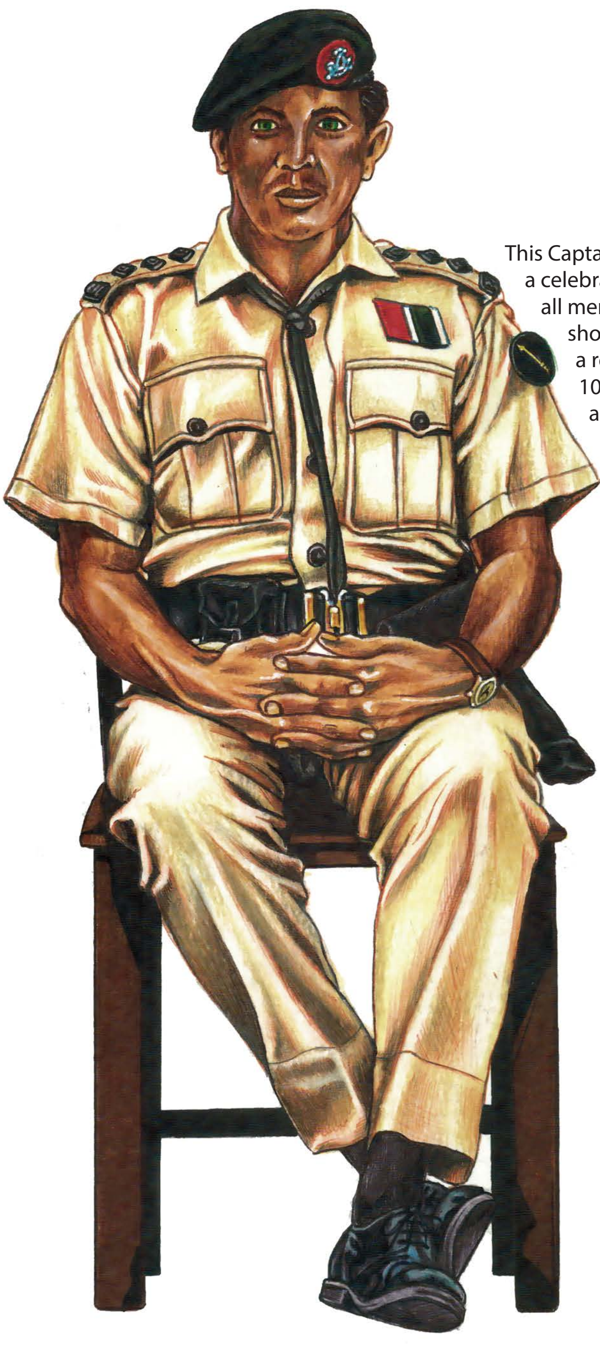
Between 1966 and 1970, the PR China donated up to 700 Type-59 main battle tanks to Pakistan and they formed the backbone of the Armoured Corps during the war in 1971, serving in a total of 10 armoured regiments. Often disparaged in the West, the tank proved superior in manoeuvrability and firepower to almost everything in Indian Army's service, short of its 'Soviet originals'; the T-54/55-series. Similar to other types in service at the time, the majority received a disruptive camouflage pattern in grey atop of their dark green livery, applied before delivery. However, relatively few of Type-59s deployed in the Chhamb-, Sialkot-, and Shakargarh Sectors received the white identification strip around their turrets. (Artwork by David Bocquelet)



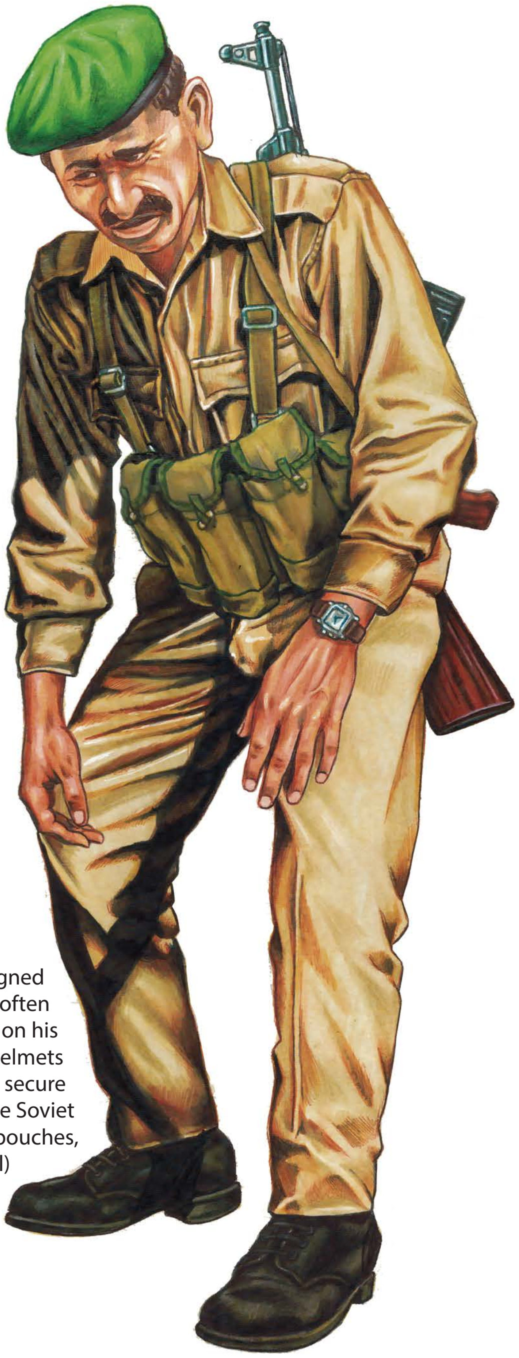
The KMT-5M was a Soviet-designed mechanical mine-clearing device, designed to disable anti-tank mines by rolling over them in the lines in front of tank tracks. Production began in the early 1960s and by the end of the decade, the system was manufactured in the PR China, Czechoslovakia and Poland. Exactly how many were acquired by Pakistan remains unknown but usually, there should have been enough around to equip at least three vehicles in every armoured squadron. The Pakistani Army still lacked armoured recovery vehicles and the Chinese-made Tank Rescue Tractor T-59 was acquired only after the war of 1971. (Artwork by David Bocquelet)



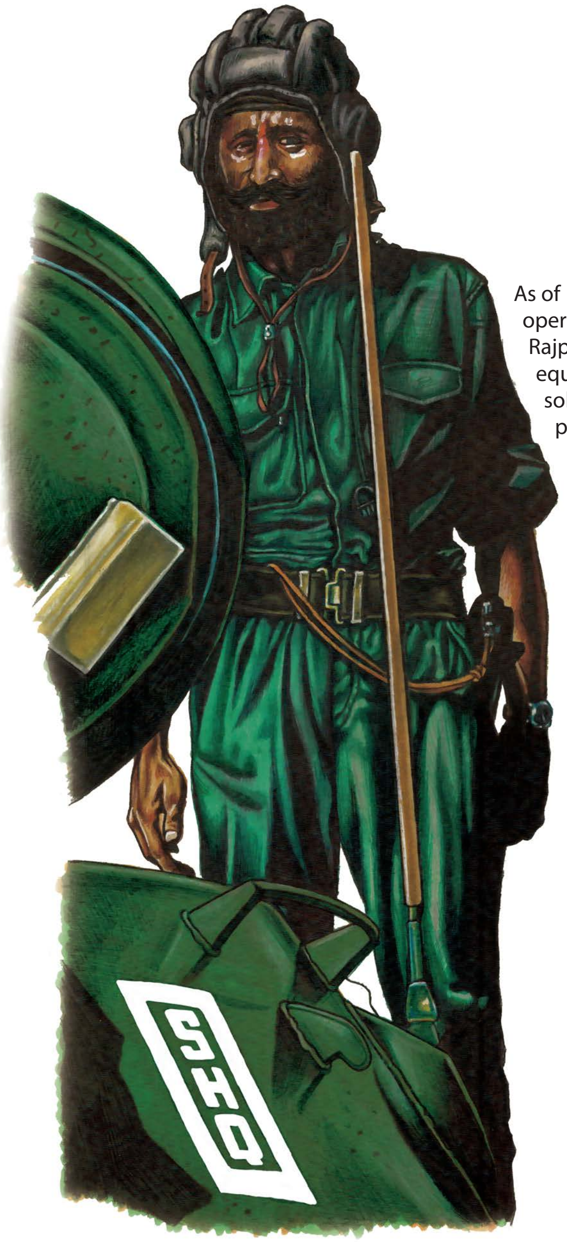
The 105mm Howitzer Motor Carriage M7 was a US-made self-propelled gun based on the combination of the M2A1 105mm howitzer with the chassis of the M4 Sherman tank. A total of 2,489 were manufactured during the Second World War, and Pakistan received enough to equip medium artillery regiments of at least two of its armoured divisions. By 1971, surviving M7s were in poor mechanical condition, but still serving with – for example – the 15th Artillery Regiment of the 8th Independent Armoured Brigade. (Artwork by David Bocquelet)



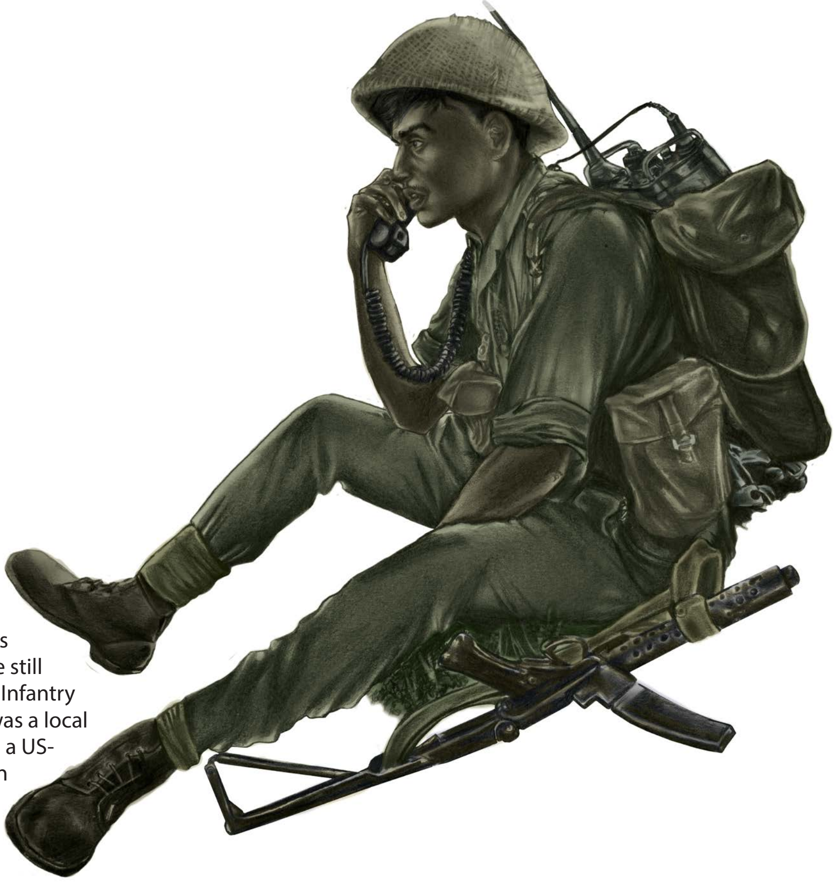
This Captain of the 19 Frontier Force Regiment of the Pakistan Army, is shown as during a celebration before the 1971 War, while wearing the Khaki Drill uniform common to all members of the Pakistani Army (changed very little over the decades), leather shoes, and the dark green beret with the silver insignia of the Frontier Force on a red fabric background. The badge on the left sleeve appears to be that of the 10th Infantry Division, and the tabs above the left pocket refer to his medals and decorations. His belt is a black leather copy of the British 1937 Pattern, with a small pouch for ammunition for his Webley or Smith & Wesson revolver carried in the fabric holster, also of British design. It is worth noting that many officers also carried Soviet-style leather holsters for their Tokarev pistols or Chinese T-54 copies. (Artwork by Anderson Subtil)



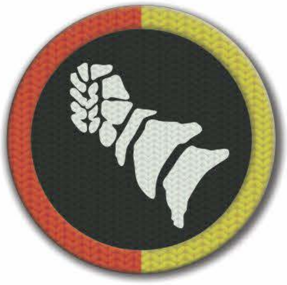
This Pakistan Army's infantryman is shown in the typical, British-designed Khaki Drill uniform and gear, still the most common of 1971 (the shirt was often complemented by a light olive green pullover with a v-neck). The beret on his head was typically worn in the rear, replaced in combat by British steel helmets or the American-origin M1s (in either case: properly covered with a net to secure camouflage). His assault rifle is likely a Type 56, a Chinese copy of the Soviet Kalashnikov AK-47. The magazines were carried in so-called 'ChiCom' chest-pouches, also of Chinese origin. (Artwork by Anderson Subtil)



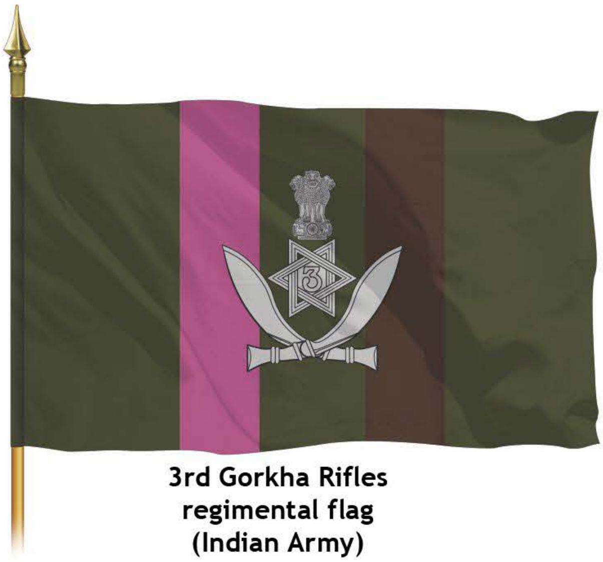
As of 1971, the Indian Army had hardly any mechanised infantry units; the few battalions operating armoured OT-62 TOPAS personnel carriers – like the 1st Dogra or the 16th Rajputana Rifles – were assigned to independent armoured brigades, while the BTR-60-equipped 7th Grenadiers was assigned to the 19th Brigade of the 26th Division. This soldier of the 7th Grenadiers is shown wearing a green jumpsuit and the classic, Soviet padded helmet. Due to the limited space inside the BTR-60, its crew members did not carry long guns but were authorised to carry M1937 officer belts and British-origin, Browning Hi-Power pistols. (Artwork by Anderson Subtil)



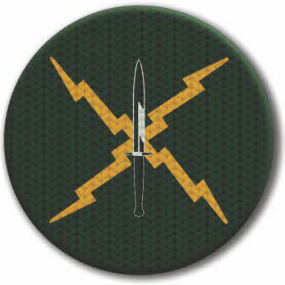
Although still heavily influenced by the British, by 1971 the Indian Army had already adopted the dark olive-green colour for its uniforms, although many items, such as the steel helmet with fabric cover and ankle gaiters, were still typically of British design. This radio operator of the 12th Infantry Division is further shown wearing webbing harness, which was a local copy of the British Army's 1937 pattern, and – on the back – a US-made NA-PRC-77 radio. His weaponry consists of an Indian variant of the Sterling submachine gun, manufactured at the Indian Ordnance Factory as the Sub-Machine Gun Carbine 9 mm 1A1. (Artwork by Anderson Subtil)



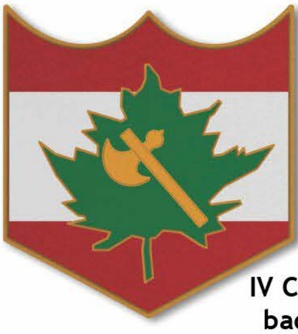
6th Armoured Division (Pakistan Army)



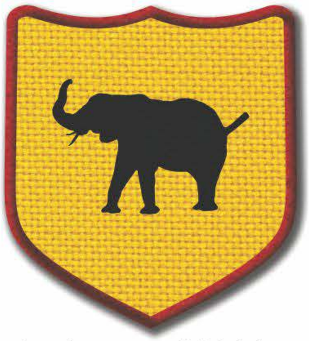
3rd Gorkha Rifles regimental flag (Indian Army)



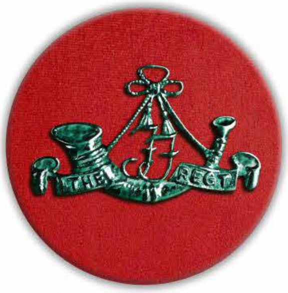
Infantry badge (Pakistan Army)



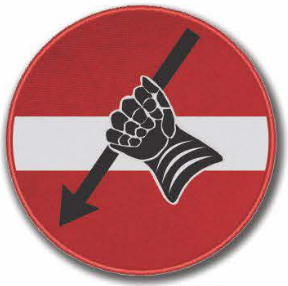
IV Corps badge (Indian Army)



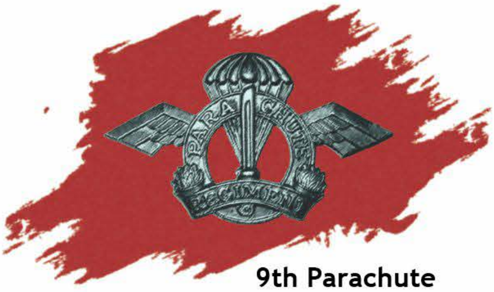
1st Armoured Division (Indian Army)



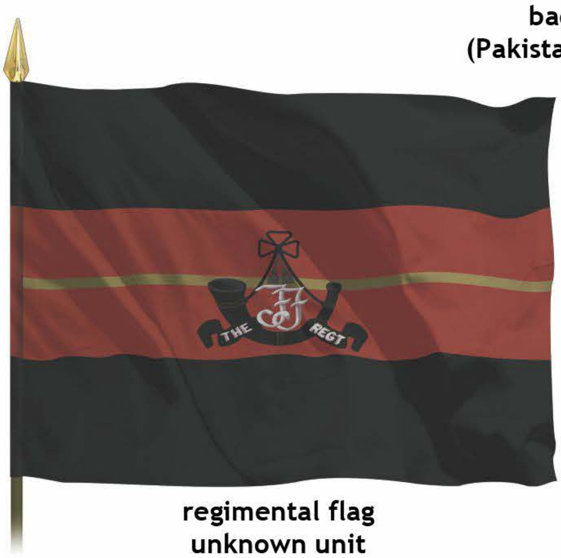
Frontier Force beret insignia (Pakistan Army)



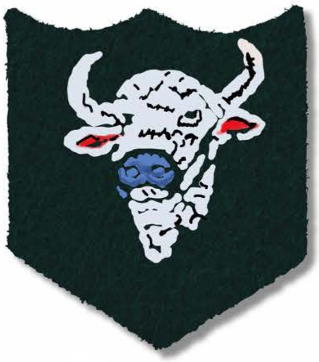
IV Corps badge (Pakistan Army)



9th Parachute Commando Regiment (Indian Army)

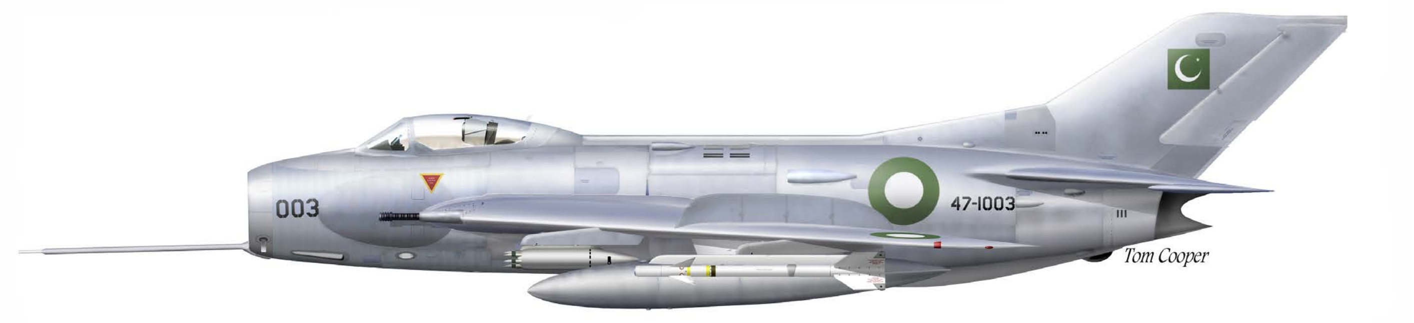


regimental flag unknown unit (Indian Army)

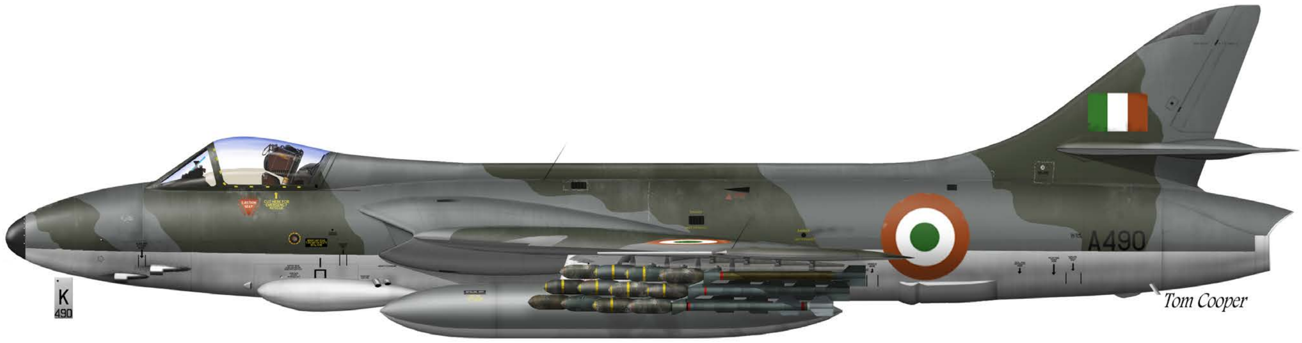


54th Infantry Division (Indian Army)

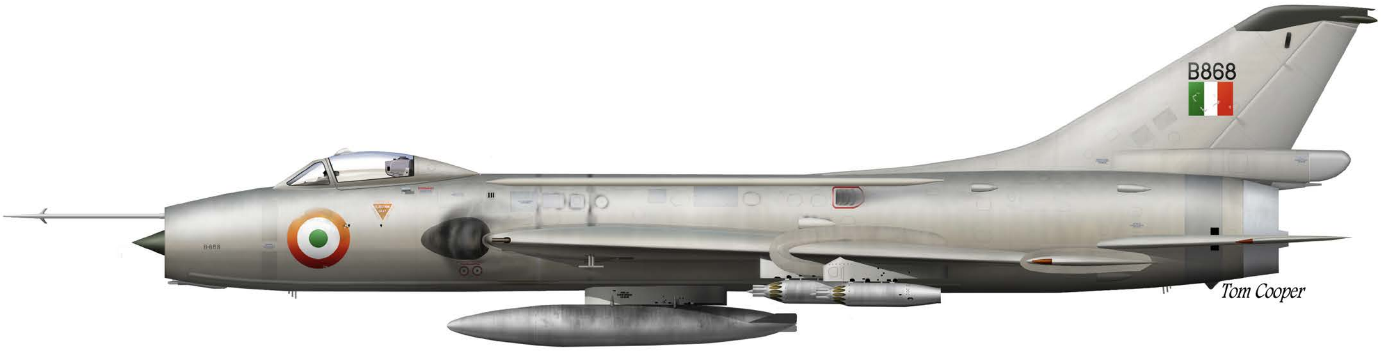
Both Indian and Pakistani armies have rich traditions, with colourful heraldry and regalia. Shown is a small selection of typical flags and of different insignia, either applied on vehicles, or worn by troops. (Artworks by Anderson Subtil)



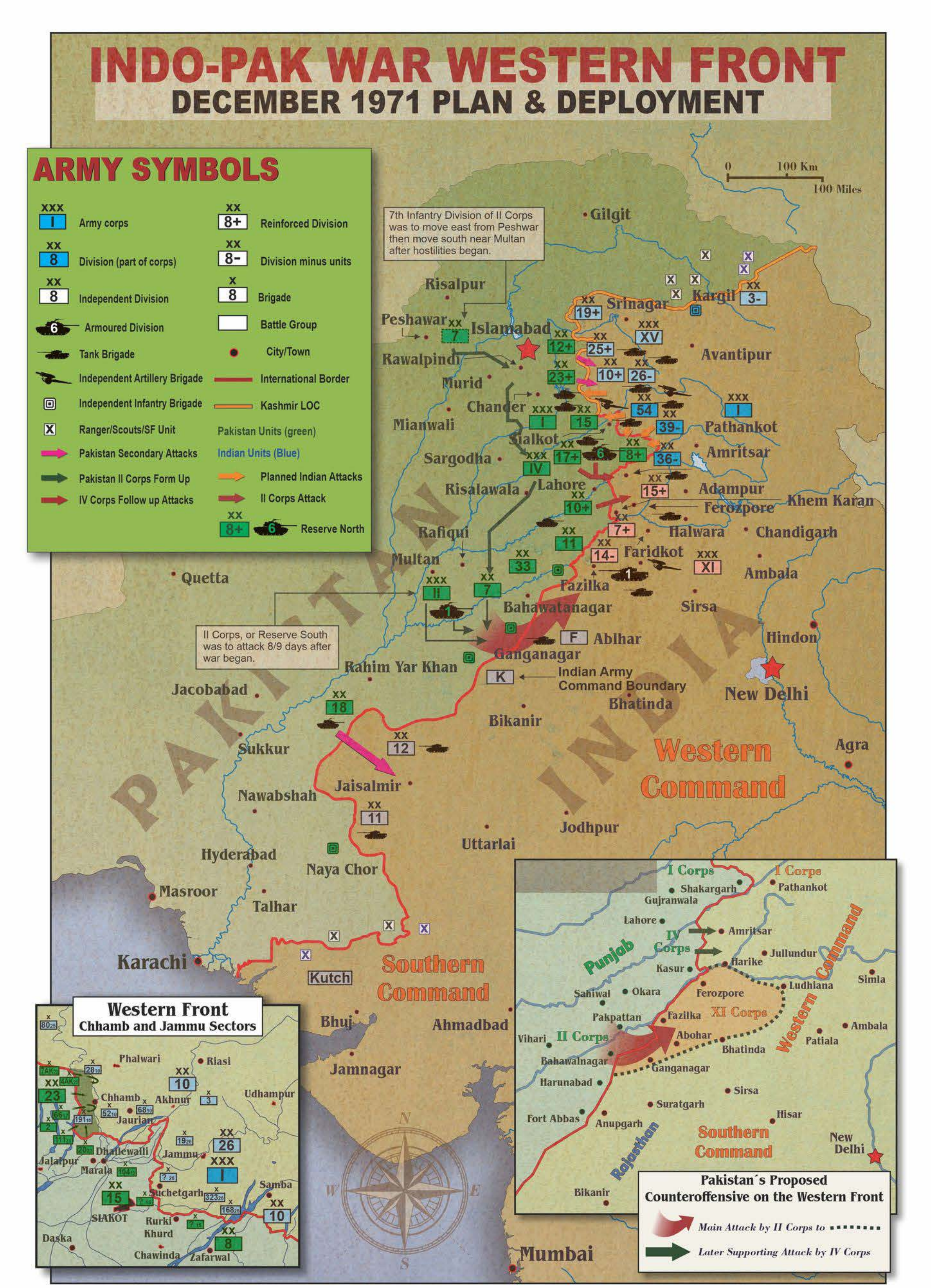
Except for its fleet of North American F-86Fs Sabres and Sabre F.Mk 6s, the primary tool of close air support of the Pakistani Air Force during the 1971 Indo-Pakistani War was the Shenyang F-6, the Chinese copy of the MiG-19S. About 80 were available at the onset of hostilities, most of them left in bare metal overall, as shown here – although many received makeshift camouflage patterns during the conflict, applied in whatever colours were available. Their three NR-30 30mm guns proved highly effective even against the Indian armour and they could also be armed with ORO-57K pods for unguided 57mm rockets, as shown on the inboard underwing pylon of this example. AIM-9B Sidewinder air-to-air missiles served for self-defence-purposes. (Artwork by Tom Cooper)



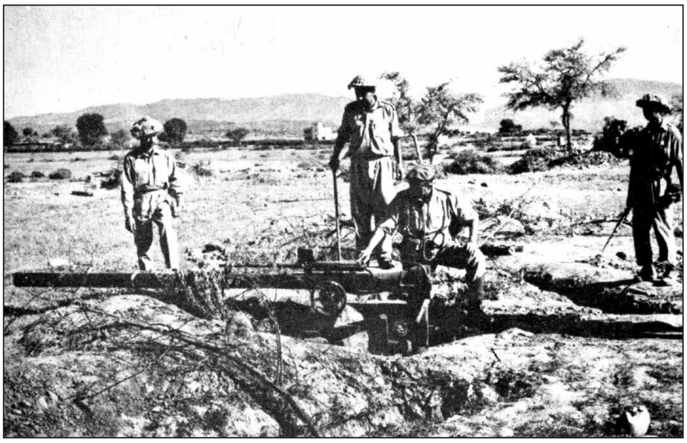
As of 1971, primary ground attack aircraft of the Indian Air Force was still the Hawker Hunter: 112 single-seaters were available as of 4 December 1971, in versions F.Mk 56 and F.Mk 56A. All wore the standardised camouflage pattern in dark sea grey and dark green on upper surfaces and sides and high-speed silver finish on undersides. Except for four internal ADEN 30mm cannons (with a total of 540 rounds), they were armed with up to 24 T.10 127mm unguided rockets, installed in four banks of three each, under every wing. This F.Mk 56A from No. 27 Squadron was one of first Indian Air Force jets lost over the 'Western Front': on 4 December 1971, it was shot down outside Duman, in the Chakwal area of the Punjab. Its pilot, Flight Leader Sudhir Tyagi was killed. (Artwork by Tom Cooper)



A new appearance in the skies over the battlefields of the 1971 Indo-Pakistani War were the Sukhoi Su-7BMK fighter-bombers. India acquired a total of 140 of these large jets between 1967 and 1970 and they flew interdiction strikes and close air support, usually armed with up to four UB-16-57 pods for S-5 57mm unguided rockets, installed on underwing hardpoints, as shown here. Carriage of a pair of drop tanks was obligatory, due to the type's critically short range. At the start of the war, the mass of Indian Su-7BMKs were still left in their 'silver grey' livery (actually consisting of two layers of clear lacquer mixed with 10 percent and 5 percent aluminium powder, respectively); disruptive camouflage patterns were applied during the first week of the war. This Su-7BMK was shot down on 6 December 1971, over the Samba area, while flown by Flight Lieutenant V. K. Vahi. (Artwork by Tom Cooper)


INDO-PAK WAR WESTERN FRONT
DECEMBER 1971 PLAN & DEPLOYMENT
ARMY SYMBOLS
Army corps
Division (part of corps)
Independent Division
Armoured Division
Tank Brigade
Independent Artillery Brigade
Independent Infantry Brigade
Ranger/Scouts/SF Unit
Pakistan Secondary Attacks
Pakistan II Corps Form Up
IV Corps Follow up Attacks
Reinforced Division
Division minus units
Brigade
Battle Group
City/Town
International Border
Kashmir LOC
Pakistan Units (green)
Indian Units (Blue)
Planned Indian Attacks
II Corps Attack
Reserve North
0
100 Km
100 Miles
7th Infantry Division of II Corps was to move east from Peshwar then move south near Multan after hostilities began.
II Corps, or Reserve South was to attack 8/9 days after war began.
Indian Army Command Boundary
Gilgit
Kargil
Srinagar
Risalpur
Peshawar
Islamabad
Rawalpindi
Murid
Chander
Mianwali
Sialkot
Sargodha
Risalawala
Lahore
Avantipur
Pathankot
Amritsar
Adampur
Ferozpore
Khem Karan
Halwara
Chandigarh
Faridkot
Ambala
Rafiqui
Multan
Quetta
Fazilka
Bahawatanagar
Sirsa
Ablhar
Ganganagar
Hindon
Rahim Yar Khan
Jacobabad
Bhatinda
New Delhi
Bikanir
Sukkur
Jaisalmir
Nawabshah
Agra
Western Command
Jodhpur
Uttarlai
Hyderabad
Naya Chor
Masroor
Talhar
Karachi
Kutch
Southern Command
Bhuj
Ahmadbad
Jamnagar
Mumbai
PAKISTAN
INDIA
N
S
E
W
Western Front
Chhamb and Jammu Sectors
Phalwari
Riasi
Chhamb
Akhnur
Jaurian
Udhampur
Dhallewalli
Jammu
Jalalpur
Marala
Suchetgarh
Samba
SIAKOT
Rurki Khurd
Daska
Chawinda
Zafarwal
I Corps
Shakargarh
Gujranwala
Pathankot
Lahore
IV Corps
Amritsar
Punjab
Jullundur
Harike
Kasur
Ludhiana
Simla
Sahiwal
Okara
Ferozpore
Western Command
Pakpattan
Fazilka
XI Corps
Ambala
Vihari
II Corps
Abohar
Patiala
Bahawalnagar
Bhatinda
Ganganagar
Harunabad
Sirsa
Suratgarh
Fort Abbas
Anupgarh
Hisar
Rajasthan
Southern Command
New Delhi
Bikanir
Pakistan´s Proposed Counteroffensive on the Western Front
Main Attack by II Corps to
Later Supporting Attack by IV Corps

(Map by Anderson Subtil)



Pakistani troops inspecting the position of an entrenched Indian M40 recoilless gun captured in the Chhamb Sector. (Albert Grandolini collection)

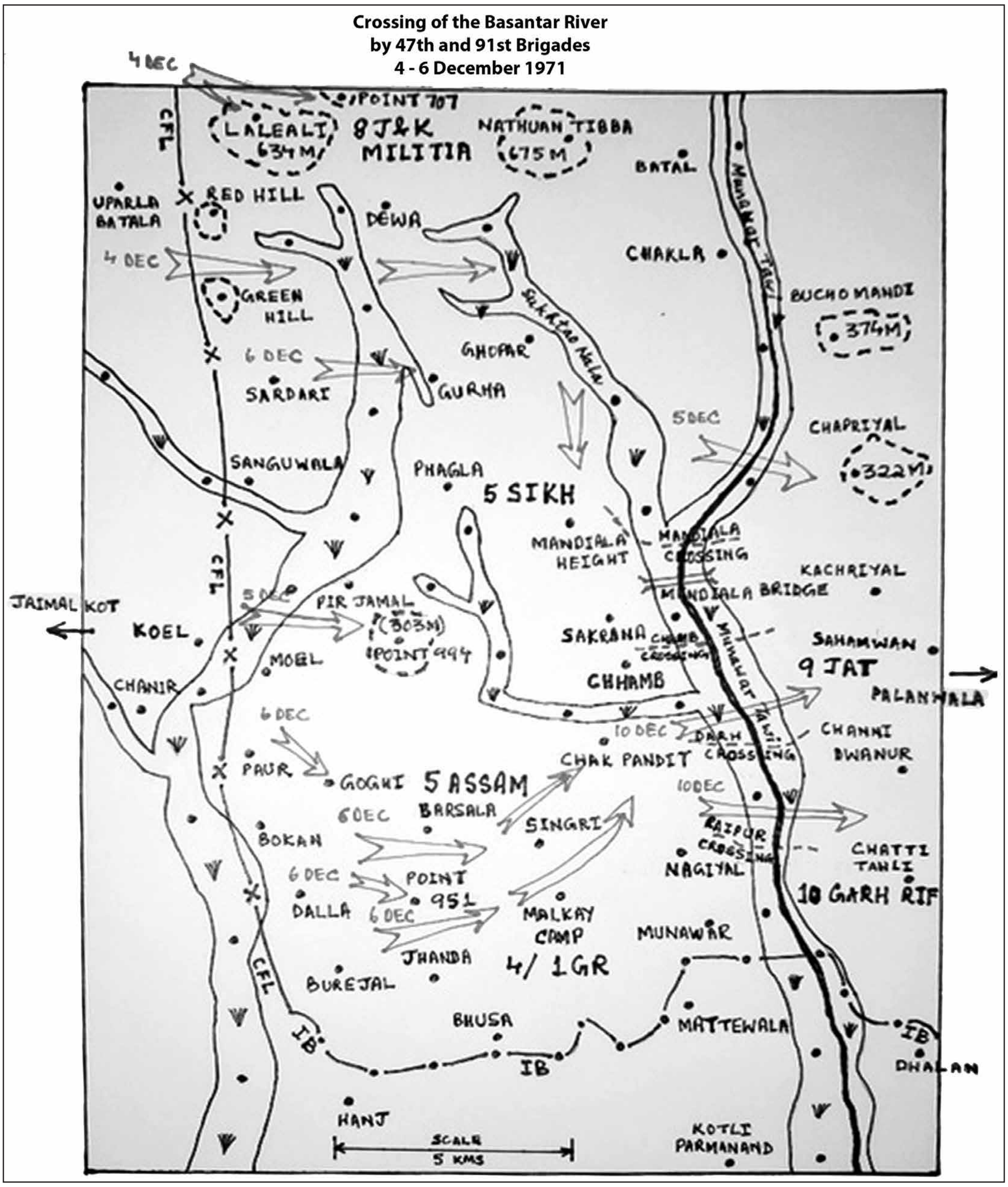
intelligence in those days was superior to India's, for reasons outside the scope of this monograph.

The next notable point is that India had done little reconnaissance of the tank ability of the terrain west of the Tawi. Pakistan, using infiltrated civilians, had a better idea of the ground but nowhere good enough. Pakistan should have done reconnaissance as it attacked.[17] In the early September 1965 battle for Chaamb, the boggy terrain played a major part in stalling the Pakistan offensive. The attack was boldly conceived and executed, caught the defenders by surprise, and almost succeeded in capturing Akhnoor.

Operations[18]

The operations on both sides were confused, appearing to the observer to be more of a dangerous series of brawls than a battle guided by a commander on each side. In fact, this was not true. India could not give up ground to organise its counter-attack so every Pakistan movement had to be immediately countered by whatever was at hand. In one case, only one Indian tank squadron supported by an ad hoc platoon of 5th Sikhs, composed of non-combatant support personnel, signals and supply soldiers, had to stop a heavy Pakistan attack. Unfortunately, the bravery of the Junior Commissioned Officer leading the defence was not recognised by an award.

Mandiala bridge was to be captured, as it was the sole 40-ton concrete bridge among the four Tawi crossings, loss of the bridge would force India back east across the Tawi River. GOC Pakistan 23rd Division devised an elaborate deception with small sub-units that he ensured were seen by the defenders. The diversion helped him to conceal the movement into the sector of 66th Brigade, as well as 11th Cavalry (ex-2nd Armoured Brigade) with an infantry battalion, a Reconnaissance and Support company and an engineer field company.



Crossing of the Basantar River
by 47th and 91st Brigades
4 - 6 December 1971

4 DEC
POINT 707
LALEALI 634M
8 J&K MILITIA
NATHUAN TIBBA 675M
BATAL
CFL
UPARLA BATALA
RED HILL
DEWA
4 DEC
CHAKLA
GREEN HILL
BUCHO MANDI 374M
6 DEC
GHOPAR
SARDARI
GURHA
5 DEC
CHAPRIYAL 322M
SANGUWALA
PHAGLA
5 SIKH
MANDIALA HEIGHT
MANDIALA CROSSING
KACHRIYAL
MANDIALA BRIDGE
JAIMAL KOT
5 DEC
PIR JAMAL (303M) POINT 994
KOEL
SAKRANA
CHAMB CROSSING
SAHAMWAN
MOEL
CHHAMB
9 JAT
PALANWALA
CHANIR
6 DEC
10 DEC
DARH CROSSING
CHANNI DWANUR
PAUR
GOGHI
5 ASSAM
CHAK PANDIT
10 DEC
6 DEC
BARSALA
SINGRI
RAIPUR CROSSING
BOKAN
CHATTI TAHLI
6 DEC
POINT 951
NAGIYAL
10 GARH RIF
DALLA
6 DEC
MALKAY CAMP
MUNAWAR
JHANDA
4/ 1GR
BUREJAL
IB
BHUSA
MATTEWALA
IB
DHALAN
HANJ
SCALE 5 KMS
KOTLI PARMANAND
MUNAWAR TAWI

Based on Achutan,[14] this map shows the IB (international border), while the CFL stands for the cease fire line from the 1947–1948 War. (Ravi Rikhye collection)

Pakistan Artillery in the Battle of Chhamb

Lieutenant General Baljit Singh, then a young officer with 12th Field Regiment, noted that no matter where Indian artillery was located, Pakistan artillery seemed to know. When Indian guns shifted, within an hour's time, the Pakistanis knew the new location and were dropping accurate fire on the Indians. Tactical reconnaissance on both sides was patchy due to lack of resources and in India's case, the Air Force was disinclined to spare sorties for this task and helicopters were unavailable.19

Baljit notes that when the Pakistanis hit 191st Brigade, while the battalions fought staunchly and bravely, none launched even a one company

Pakistani Army officers inspecting an Indian T-54 main battle tank captured in the Chhamb Sector. (Albert Grandolini collection)

counter-attack. He opines that had the brigade and supporting armour been more aggressive from the start, Pakistan might have been defeated then and there. There is no mystery here; the brigade was under orders to withdraw east of the Munawar Tawi, which it did. Its orders made no mention of staging counterattacks. Was this a higher command echelon failure? Apparently, the answer is negative.

The strength of the attack came as an unpleasant surprise to the Indians, who had expected a single brigade and an armoured regiment, not the four infantry and one armoured brigades that opened the Pakistani attack. There was also confusion as the brigade was shifting from an offensive to a defensive posture. An additional positive factor was that the senior commanders were very reluctant to give up their carefully prepared offensive. There was no lack of initiative by the field grade officers. Abdo Sandhu relates:

> When the Mandiala bridge was briefly captured, it had become imperative to recapture it earliest. The orders were passed to 5th Sikh and Regimental HQ Troop of 9th Horse, and 5/8th Gr with a troop of 72nd Armoured Regiment to attack from west and east respectively. Since the forward

Pre-war training of Pakistani infantry and armour – in this case an M48A1 main battle tank – in the Sialkot Sector. (Albert Grandolini collection)

A pre-war photo of troops of the 13th Lancers, the last regiment of the Pakistani Army to operate M47 main battle tanks. (Albert Grandolini collection)

> company localities of 5th Sikh i.e. Gurkha, Pt 303, Phagla, and Mandiala South were under constant pressure of the Pakistanis, no personnel could be pulled out from them. The Battalion HQ was in the Sakrana area, not too far from the bridge. So, the CO , Lt Col P. K. Khanna, formed an ad hoc platoon for this purpose.

This was an unusual grouping to say the least, forced by circumstances. It consisted of all the personnel who could be spared from the Battalion HQ, i.e. Protection Section (the battalion commander's guard detail), Signal Platoon personnel, orderlies and message runners. The Jemadar Adjutant (Naib Subedar Adjutant) was given command of this force. They formed quickly and went into action. This was not a classic counter-attack, but a quick counteraction of sorts. The JCO was not given a gallantry award for this action.

It needs to be kept in mind that unlike regular fighting platoons of regular companies, this was a motley grouping, who had never trained together for such a purpose. They were suddenly 'banded together'.[20]

Blunders

Pakistan denied itself a meaningful victory as GOC I Corps refused to follow GHQ's orders and GHQ seemed unable to force it to do so. 17th Division was supposed to be subordinated to 23rd Division. Instead, Pakistan's GOC I Corps insisted that breaking up his two-division strike corps would make his task of defending Sialkot impossible. That the Indian advance was a crawl and that Akhnoor and surrounding areas could be seized before the Indians got anyway near Sialkot, did not seem to impress itself on the corps commander's mind. There is also the likelihood that if Akhnoor had failed, Indian I Corps plans would have drastically changed to the defensive, eliminating a threat to Sialkot.

There is a question if GOC Pakistan's 23rd Division could simultaneously have functioned as an ad hoc corps GOC, as well as for his own division. This seems unlikely. The correct solution was for Pakistan GOC I Corps to take charge of the offensive, with his 6th Armoured Division to exploit. As seen, however, the GOC wanted only to sit tight. So, this too would not have worked.

India also denied itself a potential major victory by cancelling its offensive just 48 hours before H-Hour and forcing Indian 10th Division into a defensive posture. Yet again, the policy of 'not one inch' came into play.

GOC 10th Division was criticised by some for not launching an offensive to recover lost territory when he defeated Pakistan's attempt to cross eastward across the Munawar Tawi. 10th Division, however, had seen the hardest fighting of any division on either front and Pakistan's troops were digging in on the western side of the river. Time was needed for reorganisation and replenishment for an offensive. The commanding officer of Indian 68th Brigade also created a delay by demanding more resources. Had the war continued as India had planned, 10th and 26th Divisions could have joined in the second phase Indian offensive. It seems likely that GOC Western Command and GOC XV Corps were wiping their brows that the disaster at Chhamb had not been worse, because neither ordered 10th Division into a hasty counter-offensive. To honour their general, Pakistan renamed Chhamb after him, and it is now known as Iftikarabad.

Major General J. S. Sandhu's Commentary of the Battle of Chhamb

The following points were extracted from a conversation with Major General J. S. Sandhu, and aim to provide a greater perspective of the Chhamb battle:

1. 5 Sikh had the strongest defences in the 191st Brigade sector in the Chhamb Salient. These defence works had been constructed over a period of time after ideas from 1 November 1971, they were the 'covering troops' battalion. However, the other two battalions had built up good defences after moving forward. All the companies had minefields in front and between them. However, due to the paucity of A Tk mines, the dummy minefield gap (left for the planned offensive), had not yet been covered.

2. 'All' three battalions (5th Sikh, 5th Assam and 4/1st GR) defences continued to hold up until 6 December. Some locations were taken on the morning of the 6th, but the operation situation changed only after the Pakistani forces 'chanced' through the dummy minefield and reached the Tawi in the evening, going between the 5th Assam and 4/1st GR defences.

3. However, even at that stage, the brigade was ordered by the GOC to make its defences compact (by readjusting 5th Assam and 4/1st GR) and hold on, but unknown to the 191st Brigade (as there was no communication with him at that point of time) both these battalions had withdrawn across east of the river. The brigade commander only knew from the Aryt net. (Pages 158,159). He mentioned this in a talk to the USI.[1]

4. While the majority of available maps shows the 8th Jammu and Kashmir, 5th Assam, and 4/1st Gurkha Rifles having no reserve companies, actually, they had companies deployed in depth. 5th Assam (facing west) had three companies forward (Ghogi, Barsala and Point 951), with 'one coy' (company) at Singri, in depth. So also 4/1st Gurkha Rifles which was facing south towards the Infantry Brigade had two companies forward (Jhanda and Mannawar), and 'two in depth' (Malke Camp and Nageal). The Brigade OC R. K. Jasbir Singh picked a weak force to counter-attack Mandiala north on the 5th , when he could (and indeed should) have picked up both the depth companies (A and B Company), and we could have still recaptured Mandiala, even after the 7th Kumaon fiasco. As far as 5th Sikh is concerned, it had three companies in front (north to south, these were Gurha, Phagla and Pt 303), and the Mandiala ridges were somewhat echeloned to the rear. There was also a platoon at Kachreal'. Thus, the brigade had three companies in depth, even discounting a platoon of the Sikh.

5. When the Pakistani artillery barrage began, late on 3 December, 10th Garwhal was supposed to cross over the Tawi and act as a reserve. During this time, and until 5 December in the morning, the Indian forward defences had continued to hold and there was no need for an intervention. It was only on the morning of 5 December that a bigger picture had started emerging. 10th Garhwal which was deployed ab-initio east of the Tawi near the Raipur Crossing, as well as to defend against any Pakistani attack through their Nadala Enclave, knew that area well and it was thought prudent to leave it where it was: it was only re-assigned to the control of the 52nd Infantry Brigade. However, the same day, 5/8th GR (less the company deployed at Mandiala bridge area) was moved across the river and placed under 191st Brigade and they acquitted themselves very well. On the other hand, 10th Garhwal did well later, in the re-capture of the Darh/Raipur crossing Bridgeheads, as it also knew the terrain well.

6. Although some Pakistanis stress that the artillery of two sides was equal, this is incorrect, because the Pakistani accounts do not counting the artillery of I Corps, all of which was subjected to the control of the 23rd Division. As a result, this unit had more than the entire Pakistani Army in the eastern theatre (Bangladesh). A captured Fire Plan gave out the details to every artillary regiment and an Air Commodore rank officer was positioned at the division HQ to coordinate the air support. Just to make another comparison, the entire Pakistan Air Force in the east was commanded by an officer of similar rank. Such was the importance given to this Pakistani offensive.

5

SIALKOT SECTOR

With a retrospective view of 50 years, the battle for the Sialkot sector seems a strange affray with the powerful Indian I Corps acting as if was caught in mud. It was the biggest single Indian battle of the 1971 War in terms of troops committed and in the same terms, the smallest important battle fought by Pakistan and a masterpiece of economy of force. The Indian corps advanced at a rate of 1km a day with three infantry divisions and two large armoured brigades, facing a Pakistan infantry brigade, 8th (I) Armoured Brigade, and the ad hoc armour/infantry brigade-sized Changez Force.

However, in the continuing celebratory flush of the 1971 War, India still celebrates this as a great victory and while two of the four top awards won by the Army among the combined Indian forces in East and West Pakistan shows the courage of individual soldiers, it cannot detract from what we must today consider a massive failure, even by the standards of the Indian Army's higher organisation of

Headquarters-section of a Pakistani Army company at work during the war. (Albert Grandolini collection)

the day. After all, the eastern campaign was won by the same higher organisation!

A word of explanation; when the Indian Army fought the first Indo-Pakistan War 1947 starting just months after Independence, its most senior combat officers were three brigadiers who had commanded brigades during the Burma campaign of the Second World War. The Army was simultaneously involved in the Hyderabad rebellion and large scale policing due to the Hindu-Muslim riots. Its commander-in-chief and some other senior officers, were British and on temporary contracts while the Army settled itself. However, they saw themselves as subordinate to the departing Viceroy of India, Lord Louis Mountbatten, a Royal Navy Rear Admiral appointed to the job because he was part of the royal family.

Before November 1947, India had no infrastructure in Kashmir and it was ruled by an independent king who accepted British sovereignty over India. Access to Kashmir was via a rail line in Sialkot, which was given to Pakistan; there was only a vague road from Pathankot to Jammu and then to Srinagar.

Thus, the war was fought with utmost tentativeness, not helped by the Indian Prime Minister who was a pacifist and distrustful of the military and spending on defence. Bold behaviour by senior officers was discouraged by the British command-in-chief and his staff, both for political and military reasons. The military reasons included the British, Second World War, senior leadership style of functioning, of which Montgomery was the greatest exponent, but hardly atypical of the 'slow and steady' approach of the British Army. This approach can be described as tentatively approving a course of action, recoiling from it as too risky and coming up with another plan that may well meet the same fate and when the plan was launched, act with the utmost caution. One motto characterised the British Army: 'No Can Do', a tradition the Indian Army 'gloriously' followed to the letter.

Unsurprisingly, the first war became a battle of battalions and stalemates. Eighteen years later, a much-enlarged Indian Army, after being ignominiously defeated by the Chinese in 1962, the second war became a brigade commander's war. In 1971, it was a division commander's war. Today, confident Indian commanders can manage armies and multiple corps. Aside from lack of experience at the corps and army level, in 1971 the army was hobbled by the 'not one inch' doctrine.

Pakistani infantry hide in the tall grass of the Sialkot sector. (Albert Grandolini collection)

Pakistani publications, military gear, ammunition and hand grenades captured in the Sialkot Sector. (Albert Grandolini collection)

The same applied to the Pakistan Army with two key differences; first, the Pakistan army's leadership from Ayub's time, likely spent much time on martial law duties. Secondly, due to a shortage of resources, Pakistan had only three corps HQs for its 13-division army in the west, plus a nominal corps HQ in East Pakistan, which was simultaneously Pakistan Eastern Command.

The Indian GOC 26 Division played a role in stalemating Indian I Corps' offensive. An otherwise redoubtable officer, he seems to have lost heart when forced to send a brigade to Punch and ordered not to risk attack, weakening the division and cancelling the division's offensive. In compensation, his AOR was shortened by the creation of the X-Ray sector and one of his brigades was assigned there. GOC 26th Division also committed an entire brigade to take control of Chicken's Neck, held by two Pakistani paramilitary companies that had neither the weight or the will to put up a real fight. Essentially, he was left with just one infantry brigade to take Chicken's Neck and 3rd (I) Armoured Brigade (-). He could be justified for his lack of zeal, which may have extinguished all desire to perform his offensive task. This does not consider that two brigades joining Indian 10th Division in a counter-attack could have caused Pakistan 23rd Division to retreat.

Another error, not the fault of the GOC 26th Division, was the failure to return his division's 33rd Brigade when Pakistan's Punch attack failed and obviated the need for the brigade to remain in the Punch sector. Although 26th Division was given another brigade from I Corps – 323rd from 39th Division – the orders were to remain on the defensive in case of an attack northwards by Pakistan 15th Division. The GOC was apparently demoralised at the break up of his division.

Communications Breakdown in the 191st Brigade

Although communications are one of most important issues regarding military operations, they are rarely discussed in military histories. In the case of the 191st Brigade during the Battle in the Sialkot sector, communication was of particular importance as its headquarters were out of touch with the divisional HQ for 32 hours at a time of high crisis. This may explain India's inadequate reaction to Pakistan's offensive: by the standards of the US Army, India was under-resourced in the area of signals. [2]

On 4 December, radio relay communications were through (set-up) with 28th and 191st Infantry Brigades. However, the link with 191st Brigade was disrupted at 1600 hours when the generator was hit by enemy shelling which also damaged the vehicle. Lance Naik R. K. R. Kurup who was in the vehicle, was seriously injured and later succumbed to his injuries. There was another fatal casualty at about 2000 hours when Signalman T. R. Sharma 191 Infantry Brigade Signal Company, was killed due to enemy shelling. At 2100 hours, a spare radio relay detachment was dispatched to HQ 191st Infantry Brigade. However, due to enemy fire it could not cross the River Manawar Tawi and had to return.

At 0700 hours on 5 December, Major R. S. Anand left for HQ 191st Infantry Brigade with a step up D1, a radio set on the commanders' network and a spare radio relay terminal via the northern axis. However, the major could not proceed as Mandiala Bridge was held by the enemy. He joined the GOC at Lam at 1000 hours and proceeded to HQ 191st Infantry Brigade at 1600 hours. The radio relay link was finally through at 0330 hours on 6 December and the GOC spoke to the brigade commander. The lines to HQ 191st Brigade and 10th Artillery Brigade were frequently interrupted during the night due to enemy shelling and line parties worked round the clock.

The next morning, Major Anand left HQ 191st Brigade with the step up D1 and radio relay terminal. The radio relay vehicle got stuck near Chhamb and could not be recovered. Colonel Balachandran left for HQ 191st Brigade with AN/PRC 25 sets but could not cross the bridge which was under observed enemy fire. He proceeded on foot along Chhamb crossing. The line to 191st Brigade was put through and the GOC spoke to the brigade commander from Fire Direction Centre. At 2000 hours HQ 191st Brigade started withdrawing from Chhamb to Anderwal: the signals company destroyed encrypted material before withdrawal.[3]

6

FIRST BATTLE OF SHAKARGARH

The Shakargarh salient is a triangular fortress area with Shakargarh at its eastern vertex, Zafarwal as its northern vertex and Narowal as its southern vertex. The salient itself is the eastern part of what can be called the 'Sialkot Salient', which is defined at its western end by the north-south line Sialkot-Pasrur-Narian Mandi. Further west, outside the Sialkot salient, runs the north-south line, Gujrat-Gujranwala-Lahore. It lies at the heart of northern Punjab and is an important area to Pakistan. Politically, it is the most important part of the country whereas commercially and industrially, Karachi (Sind Province) on the Arabian Sea, is the most important.

The area is significant to India as through its north end, the Sialkot salient runs communications between Indian Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir. The eastern end controlled access to Pathankot, and the southern end, the access to the Indian North Punjab. From 1948, India greatly improved secondary roads and air access to Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh, along with primary rail access to Jammu and Srinagar. However, the construction of much better communications was still in the future.

The loss of the Pathankot-Jammu corridor was equal to the isolation of Jammu and Kashmir. Conversely, the Shakargarh and Sialkot salient offered India the exciting possibility of significantly shortening India's defence line between North Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir, as well as diminishing the Pakistan threat.

Table 15: 26th Division, Indian Army, Shakargarh Sector, December 1971

Units	Notes
26th Division	Major-General Z. C 'Zoru' Bakshi
• 8th Light Cavalry	Vijayanta Mk 1
• Central Indian Horse	also '21st Horse'; T-55
• 7th Grenadiers	BTR-60
• 10th Garhwal Rifles	
• 4th Dogra	reinforced by 1 squadron from 8th Cavalry
• 5th Kumaon	
• 9th Rajput	
19th Infantry Brigade	Brigadier Mohinder Singh
• 3/5th Gurkha Rifles	
• 7/11th Gurkha Rifles	
• 11th Guards	
• A Company 9th Parachute Commando Regiment	
• 1 squadron 8th Light Cavalry[1]	
162nd Infantry Brigade	
• 3/3rd Gurkha Rifles	
• 6th Garhwal Rifles	

Table 16: 19th Brigade (26th Division), Indian Army, Shakargarh Sector, December 1971

Units	Notes
19th Brigade	
• 4th Dogra	
• 3/5th Gurkhas	
• 7/11th Gurkhas	
• 11th Guards	
• 1 company 9th Parachute Commando	
• 2nd Reconnaissance Squadron	provided by 10th Division; equipped with AMX-13s
• 7th Grenadiers	two mechanised companies mounted on BTR-60s
• 1 Squadron 8th Cavalry	provided by 3rd Independent Armoured Brigade
• 9th Jat	provided by 68th Brigade; kept in reserve
• Central Indian Horse	divisional tank regiment of the 26th Division

Four-Part Story

The Battle of Shakargarh was one that deserves more study than it has received. Chhamb had Abdo Sandhu who analysed the battle in detail using interviews and uniquely for Indian and Pakistani histories, unit war diaries. Shakargarh, however, is a neglected story like almost all of the 1971 land battles. The principal reason being the outcome of the battle was embarrassing – and then fourfold embarrassing because despite India's large commitment of forces, very little of significance was achieved. Where gains were achieved, Indian gratuitously threw away its victory at the Simla Peace Conference of 1972.

The best available summary was published by Major-General Sukhwant Singh who, as Deputy Director of Military Operations had not only a bird's-eye-view of the entire war, but also a good understanding of strategy plus the ability to synthesise multiple data points into a coherent narrative. Unfortunately, since Sukhwant had limited space to cover the war's totality, he could devote only a short chapter to the Shakargarh salient. The official history spends a mere 15 pages, moreover, the official account of the entire war is a fine literary example of the French school of pointillism art, with the difference that the paintings when observed from a distance resolve into a unified whole, but the official and other histories, despite its multiple data points, leaves the reader confused. The same structural fault is evident in all other writing on what was India's biggest battle in the west.

The battle of Shakargarh was fought in four parts:

1. Chicken's Neck: technically within the area of responsibility of XV Corps of the Indian Army, but simpler if examined within the frame of operations by I Corps;
2. Part 2 was the Indian I Corps' offensive with two divisions and two large armoured brigades from the north of the Shakargarh salient;
3. Part 3 was the Pakistani counter-attack on Shakargarh from the east.
4. Part 4 was the Indian XI Corps' operation from the south, aiming for Narowal.

A pair of Vijayanta Mk 1 main battle tanks of the 8th Light Cavalry. Notable is the disruptive camouflage pattern applied on both vehicles. (Albert Grandolini collection)

Dissipation of Force

Perhaps the best (or worst) example for how to dissipate armour by dribs and drabs, is the fact that already, early during the war of 1971, the Indian Army broke down its 3rd Independent Armoured Brigade into numerous battalions, each of which was assigned to a different infantry brigade of a different Army Corps. As a result, the unit spent the war acting reactively, instead of seizing the initiative.

Here the confusion starts. Central Indian Horse was assigned to 26th Division. This poses the question: where was the third regiment of this brigade? It could be argued that 72nd Armoured Regiment and the brigade reconnaissance squadron could not be considered detached; rather, they were the forward element of the armoured brigade in its planned offensive through Sector into West Pakistan. However, once the Indian offensive was cancelled, both these units were running around defensively supporting 10th Division. Next, 8th Cavalry and Central India Horse were broken up for the attack on Chicken's Neck and like the two other units, were being deployed in small bits.[2]

On top of this confusion, there are indications that part of HQ 3rd (I) Armoured Brigade was detached to control Indian Armour in East Pakistan. However, sources are limited to provide further evidence.

Table 17: 3rd Independent Armoured Brigade, December 1971

Units	Notes
3rd Independent Armoured Brigade	
2nd Independent Armoured Squadron	brigade reconnaissance squadron; equipped with AMX-13s
8th Cavalry	partially detached; equipped with Vijayanta Mk 1s
21st Central Indian Horse	re-assigned to the 26th Division; Vijayanta Mk 1s
72nd Armoured Regiment	re-assigned to 10th Division; Vijayanta Mk 1s
7th Grenadiers	BRT-60s

A successful completion of these four phases would position India to complete phase 1, capturing the salient between Zarfarwal and Narowal, open the way for Phase 2. This could have given India a big victory.

Chicken's Neck

The Shakargarh battle must be prefaced by the battle for Chicken's Neck, which lay in the northwest corner of the Shakargarh salient. It was conducted by a brigade of 26th Division (HQ Jammu) under XV Corps. This battle was important both to Chhamb and Shakargarh because Chicken's Neck lay between them. On the right, the Chicken's Neck made the left flank of 26th Division vulnerable. On the left, Pakistan could attack through the area to outflank Chhamb and Akhnoor. Tactically this salient was important for India and capturing it was understandably, a priority.

Combined, this was a considerable force of five infantry battalions and a tank regiment plus additional armour. Pakistan defended the salient with two companies of 34th Punjab and a wing of the Chenab Ranger (a total of three companies). The Rangers had obsolete weapons such as 0.303 rifles and 6-pdr guns and lacked the same level of training as the regulars.

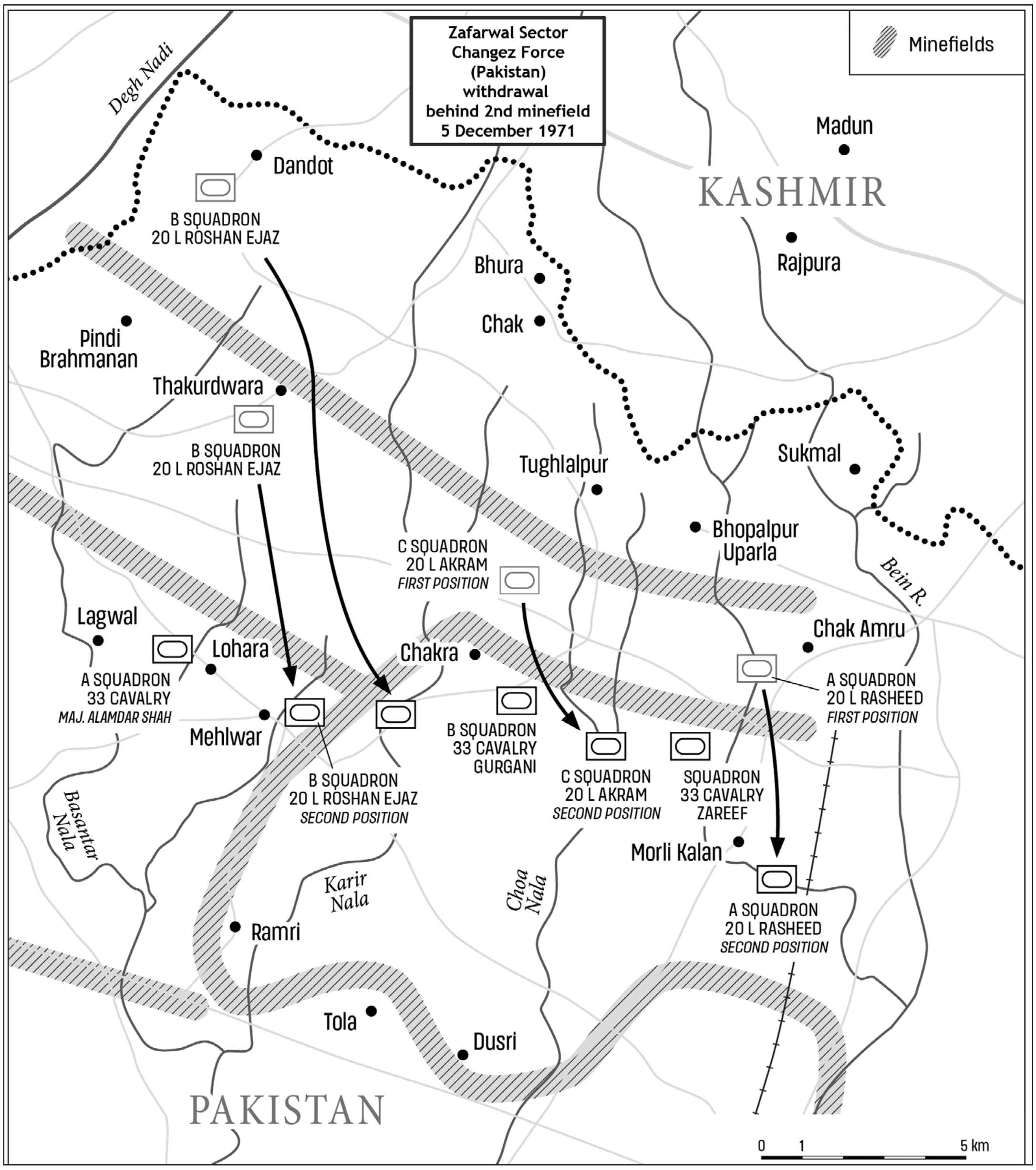
India opened its attack at 2000 hours with 4th Dogra and cleared the Chicken's Neck salient in two days. An inevitable result given the disparity in forces. Now let us discuss the action because it reveals a lot about the way Indian operated. Firstly, the Official History and Sukhwant provide evidence that they were unhappy it took two days. However, two days to take 170km^2 of unknown terrain is a decent achievement. Secondly, attention must be paid to the criticism that 19th Brigade fought an over-complicated battle – in seven phases no less. India could have finished the battle in a few hours with its armour and mechanised forces, freeing 19th Brigade for other tasks. In fact, after finishing with the salient on 7 December, the Brigade did precisely nothing and instead, the Brigade fought a lethargic infantry battalion as per standard procedure.

Thirdly, India convinced itself (without evidence) that Pakistan could launch a counter-attack from the salient and was, in its mind, fighting a major campaign even though Pakistan had only a few companies. Did India not realise how few Pakistani troops were in the salient? There is no evidence that they believed more troops were available.

The salient is surrounded by rivers and the four ferries were crucial. One ferry to the west was theoretically, capable of being used for a counter-attack against Chhamb/Akhnoor, and three ferries to the south could be used to reinforce the salient and permit a counter-attack. It appears there was some heavy fantasising going on in India's mind about the dangerous threat posed by the Pakistani possession of Chicken's Neck.

At this point, there is a strong disagreement between Pakistani and Indian history. The Indians captured or killed two platoons of Rangers including some regulars. Indian critics are unhappy because the bulk of the Pakistani force escaped with its weapons. This, say the Indians, was due to the slowness of the operation inside the salient that left the three southern ferries open for Pakistani exfiltration and escape. On the contrary, Pakistan scoffs at this assertion. So few were captured because the salient was almost empty. The Pakistanis are correct.

As a usual point of fact, Indian and Pakistani troops fought well. Mistakes made by two Indian infantry battalions were routine ones due to unfamiliarity of the ground and as India thought it was facing more troops than actual in the salient, it led to over caution. The impartial observer will wonder: how could India tie up five battalions plus armour equal to almost two regiments for such a small affair, and then after 7 December not use 19th Brigade elsewhere? The answers may be found in the Battle of Shakargarh, which sheds an unfavourable light on the leadership of the Indian Army. These criticisms are well in hindsight: for decades India congratulated itself on a brilliant battle fought and won.


Zafarwal Sector
Changez Force
(Pakistan)
withdrawal
behind 2nd minefield
5 December 1971
Minefields
Degh Nadi
Dandot
B SQUADRON
20 L ROSHAN EJAZ
Madun
KASHMIR
Rajpura
Bhura
Chak
Pindi Brahmanan
Thakurdwara
B SQUADRON
20 L ROSHAN EJAZ
Tughlalpur
Sukmal
Bhopalpur Uparla
Bein R.
C SQUADRON
20 L AKRAM
FIRST POSITION
Lagwal
Lohara
Chakra
Chak Amru
A SQUADRON
33 CAVALRY
MAJ. ALAMDAR SHAH
Mehlwar
B SQUADRON
33 CAVALRY
GURGANI
A SQUADRON
20 L RASHEED
FIRST POSITION
B SQUADRON
20 L ROSHAN EJAZ
SECOND POSITION
C SQUADRON
20 L AKRAM
SECOND POSITION
SQUADRON
33 CAVALRY
ZAREEF
Basantar Nala
Morli Kalan
Karir Nala
Choa Nala
A SQUADRON
20 L RASHEED
SECOND POSITION
Ramri
Tola
Dusri
PAKISTAN
0 1 5 km

A map showing withdrawal of the Pakistan Army's Changez Force to positions behind the second minefield, on 6 December 1971. (Map by Micky Hewitt)

Summary of What Went Wrong

On the Indian side, involved units managed to gear their various thrusts so that they interworked in terms of time and space. However, the excessive caution slowed down and eventually stopped the overall progress. On the Pakistani side, the GOC Pakistan I Corps acted as if he was (to quote Major Amin) on the Defence Ministry's internal constabulary and refused to move despite GHQ's orders. The defence of Sialkot was one mission among many under his purview but he acted as if it was the sole mission. He gave primary importance to conserving his strike force at all costs, which meant this key resource went unused.

At the start, since both India and Pakistan used their I Corps, both sides were wholly devoid of operational art. In conceptional terms, India had a strategy, but it was flawed. Both sides were approximately equal in strength and Pakistan had the advantage because it defended on interior lines, whereas Indian forces were arrayed all around the bulge and failed to gain a sufficient concentration of force at any point, to allow a breakthrough. Indian strategy, though faulty, might still have yielded good results had the war lasted six weeks instead of just two.

The field units on both sides fought ferociously but the generals were mediocre at best and cowardly at worst. Lastly, India's strategy was predicated in taking the offensive from the start, but was changed by the political leadership to the defensive, leaving Indian I Corps unbalanced and perhaps even confused, from the first day.

The Importance of Shakargarh

The idea of undertaking a major operation to cut off the area between Tanda-Pasrur-Narian Mandi attracted Indian planners. In 1965, India had undertaken a similar operation, also by Indian I Corps and actually penetrated further west. Both sides had approximately the same strength as in 1971, four divisions (India 1965, 1st Armoured, 6th, 14th, 26th to Pakistan's 6th Armoured, 7th, 8th, and 15th; in 1971, India had 26th, 36th, 39th, and 54th Divisions to Pakistan's 6th Armoured, 8th, 15th and 17th). Pakistan 7th Division had fought at Chhamb, and was re-deployed after Indian XI and I Corps offensives began.

The battle was fought under the shadow of the 1965 War, just six years past. This vitiated initiative on the Indian side. Attacking more or less the same way in 1971 as in 1965, violated the military maxim of not attacking again along an obvious axis, when the first attack failed. Moreover, India might have considered that while, in theory, pinching off the Sialkot bulge made sense, Kursk 1943 taught that because bulges allow the defender to operate on interior lines, they are not the easy targets they appear on the map. This may not have been evident of the Indian Army because few had any interest in the German or Soviet Second World War Campaigns. Striking again at an obvious point allows the defender time to build-up his defences – in this case six years for Pakistan.

Furthermore, attacking along a 270-degree battlefield means the attacker, unless numerically superior to the defender, is stretched along a vast arc and unable to gain superiority at any point for a breakthrough. Adding to this difficulty, Pakistan was prepared to give up space for time, allowing it to absorb the Indian offensive. These combined factors made a decisive victory difficult, especially in a short war where attrition plays no part and there is no replay of errors.

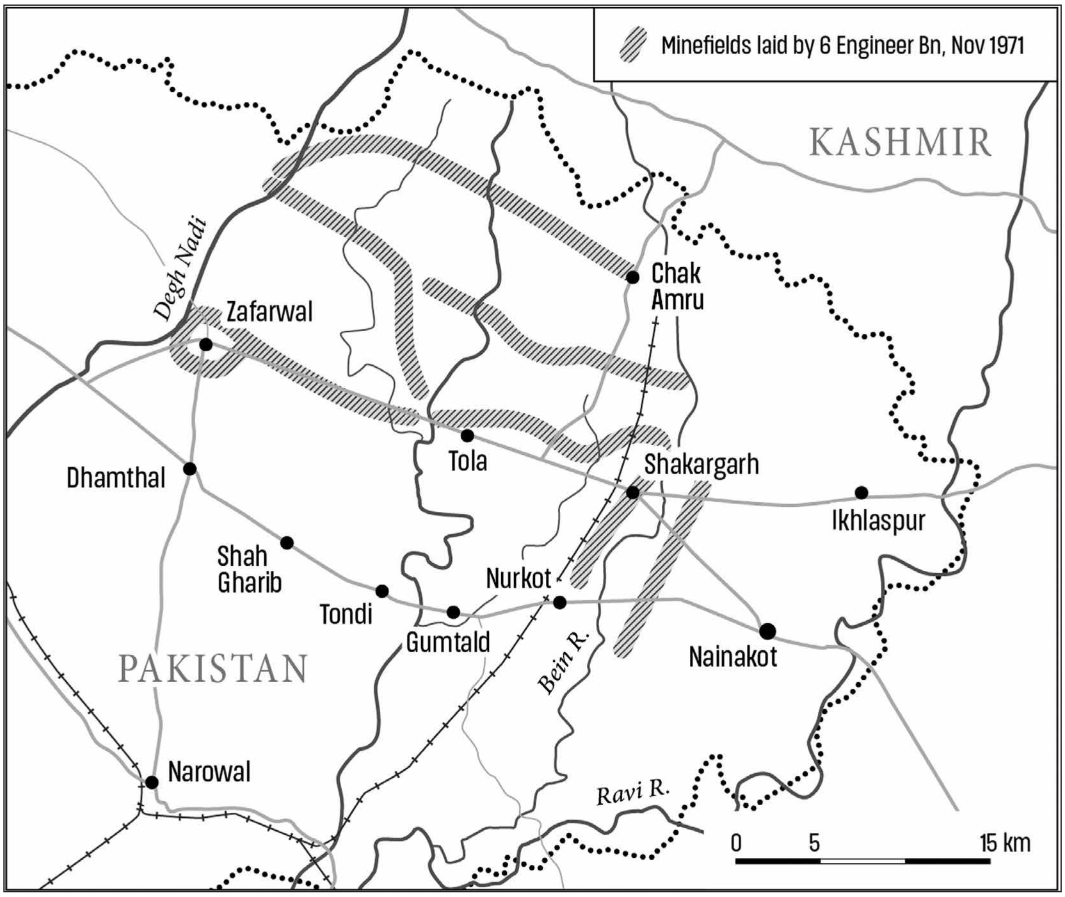
Was there no way out of this dilemma? Of course there was! As Sukhwant has noted, if Indian I Corps had attacked from the north with its three divisions abreast, victory was possible. This, of course, meant risking giving up ground in the east and south of the Shakargarh salient. This was nonetheless a good bet to chance, because a 3-division offensive from the north would have forced Pakistan to redeploy to meet the attack, thus reducing its ability to attack east and west. From the very start, India sought to defend every kilometre, a losing proposition against an enemy with interior lines. Other possibilities existed, such as a three-division offensive from Jammu westward into Pakistan.

The Indian I Corps offensive was flawed right from the planning stages and had dim chances of success. It was not as if the Pakistanis fought brilliantly, but nonetheless, the stand of the ad hoc brigade-sized Changez Force, ruined India's Phase 1 plans. It could have recovered with the planned Phase 2, especially as formations from the east had begun arriving in the west as the eastern campaign. However, external pressure forced a ceasefire on Mrs. Gandhi and Phase 2 never took off, ending hours before it was to start.

The Balance of Forces

India committed a corps of three infantry divisions (54th, 39th, and 36th), two independent armoured brigades (2nd and 16th) each of three tank regiments, a mechanised battalion and an artillery regiment. In addition, there were two independent artillery brigades, 31st and 41st and two engineer brigades from Army HQ resources, besides its own four integral divisions and corps artillery brigades and its three divisional engineer regiments. However, Pakistan I Corps had an armoured and three infantry divisions, plus an independent armoured brigade. (The second armoured brigade, Changez Force, was hastily cobbled together from other units and cannot be considered a net asset.) With almost parity, Pakistan made an India victory very difficult in a short war.

Moreover, Pakistan defended with only one division of three brigades, one armoured brigade, and an ad hoc armoured brigade. It still had the major part of an armoured division, a division of four brigades and the minor part of another division available as reserves. India had absolutely nothing as reserves. Every officer cadet knows the vital importance of maintaining a strategic reserve plus multiple tactical reserves. When both sides are near parity, this can be done only by uncovering other sectors – an impossibility under India's 'Not one inch is to be lost' orders. While one-third reserves are ideal, even a one-ninth reserve properly deployed, can make the difference between victory and defeat. Maintaining a reserve simply for its own sake is forbidden because it is pointless. The reserve has to be ferociously thrown in at the right moment, tilting the balance in one's favour.



A map of minefields laid by the 6th Engineer Battalion in the Sialkot Sector of November 1971. (Map by Micky Hewitt)

Much of the Indian effort was spent defending against a Pakistan offensive that could not and did not happen. India worried about an imaginary counter-offensive for which I Corps withdrew troops from the offensive to defend against a nonexistent threat. Although it is one thing to withdraw troops to meet an actual offensive, it is not appropriate for HQ to surrender to frantic fears and imaginings on what could happen and for which no evidence exists.

Time was spent occupying Pakistani ground that was either empty or lightly defended, with Pakistan forces ordered to trade space for time. The time gained allowed a Pakistan corps counter-offensive, but the then fearful Pakistan I Corps commander refused to move a metre, thus saving India from complete disgrace.

The Indian corps was to attack on three axes with 10 infantry (including 86th Brigade of XV Corps), two armoured and six artillery brigades, the largest force assembled in the western theatre of the 1971 War. It ended with five of its 10 brigades in reserve against the imaginary Pakistan offensive/counter-offensive. Instead of three axes it attacked only one; at the end of the war, one of the held-back axis launched a brigade attack and gained perhaps 13–15km of unopposed land. The one axis that did attack seriously with three infantry and one armoured brigade, gained perhaps 12km because it became stuck in a triple-layer minefield that although the Indians knew it was there, still took 12-days to traverse. Pakistan's main defending force was an armoured brigade and a brigade-sized task force and fought Indian I Corps to a stalemate due to Pakistan giving up ground and using economy of force.

The terrain favoured defence. Geographically, it was cut by several north-south rivers and seasonal streams and boggy ground. Tactically, Pakistan had fortified the ground over the years. The defence were significantly augmented in the last days before the war by the triple-layer minefield.

7

SECOND BATTLE OF SHAKARGARH

Normally, an account of a battle concerns generals and soldiers, guns and weapons, bravery and cowardice, good and bad luck. Shakargarh was a battle with a wholly passive participant, the triple-layer minefield. The minefield was laid in one month by the father of the iconoclastic Pakistan military historian, Major A.H. Amin and by the Pakistan 6th Engineer Battalion, aided by locals. Lieutenant Colonel Khalid M. Amin commanded the 6th Engineer battalion in 1971. He was ordered from East Pakistan to West Pakistan before the war in the west had started. His unit was surely missed by the badly outnumbered, overstressed and under sourced Pakistan Army in the east however, in the event, this was a fortunate move because the minefield, each layer between 600 and 900 metres deep and several kilometres long, became a major cause of India's failure to make a substantial advance in the Indian I Corps area. The minefield was not perfect, it was hurriedly laid, by hand, by many hundreds of unskilled personnel. In many cases, the mines were not even buried however, it did its job.

At this point, it needs noting that Major Amin was unique because as a former cavalry officer, he rode a tank. The tank's gun was set for non-stop fire. It could prove fatal to India, except Major Amin's gun fired in only one direction, backwards, aiming at his own Army, and had an unlimited magazine. He enthusiastically ripped the Pakistan Army to shred at all levels. He was irked beyond measure by hypocrisy, cowardice and the deliberate failure to recognise and reward bravery but was invariably admiring of Indian officers and men who performed well and/or bravely. His account of Battle of Shakargarh 1971 is quoted most extensively because it is the most detailed overall account available. This does not mean that the Pakistan Army of 1971 was as incompetent as he makes out, at least on a brigade and lower level.

If GOC Pakistan I Corps showed the epitome of incompetency – to the extent that a post-war commission recommended his court-martial – it was matched by the incompetency of GOC Indian I Corps and GOC Indian 12th Division. The latter escaped opprobrium as an armoured regiment and an infantry battalion fought courageously, each winning a Param Vir Chakra (two of the four top-most awards for the war) and because the Indians criticised their failed general in subdued tones. India has no equivalent of Major A. H. Amin to explore the glaring failure of some of its generals. On the Pakistan side, there were five top awards, of which one was won in the Battle of Shakargarh.[1]

Objectives

Indian I Corps had four objectives, in decreasing order of priority:

> a) The minimum – but most important to Army HQ in deference to Indian AHQ 'not one inch' order was: protect the Indian frontier from Samba to south of Pathankot from a Pakistan offensive.
> b) The second, more ambitious objective, was to seize Pakistani territory to the Bein River, along the line Zafarwal-Narowal.
> c) The third was to seize Pasrur west of the Bein by about D+5 (abandoned with the shift to the defensive on order of Army HQ).
> d) The last and most ambitious, was to break past the line Sialkot-Gujranwala and in conjunction with 10th and 26th Division of Indian XV Corps (which was covered in detail in the section on the battle for Chhamb), push as far as possible into Pakistan in the direction of Rawalpindi. By shifting to the defensive a mere 36 hours before its XV and I corps offensive was to start, India shot itself in the head, itself doing Pakistan's job.

Pakistan's objectives were more modest. Reasonably so because Pakistan had fewer troops and staying power:

> a) Protect Zafarwal-Narowal as the line of no penetration, trading space for time.
> b) Pakistan I Corps to launch a counter-offensive and push India back to its own territory.

As the minefield and covering troops forced India's I Corps to a slow pace of one kilometre a day, can it be considered a success? Possibly not as Pakistan outnumbered India due to the incorrect and timid deployment of the Indian Corps. It should have used its superior resources and the minefield (which had stalled India), to counter-attack. As Major A. H. Amin summarised:

> Colonel Sardar Yahya Effendi, a direct participant, states about missed opportunities in this battle as below : "the enemy had been fixed between the first and second layer of minefields for five days, but no effort was made to counter-attack and destroy the enemy between the two minefields. An excellent opportunity was lost on the night 10/11 December when the enemy had put in his maximum effort to get across the second minefield layer, he was still regaining his tactical balance up to the morning of 13 December. A counter-attack by 8th Independent Brigade Group supported by Changez Force would have yielded rich dividends. It could have developed into a major counter-offensive, eventually drawing in the 6th Armoured Division into a decisive riposte. But instead we sat back in our defences waiting for the enemy to attack. Effendi thus summed up poor and substandard Pakistani leadership at brigade, division and corps level as following : "the corps and lower formations seemed to have been staffed by tyros, as they let every opportunity slip out of their grasp."'
>
> It has frequently been asserted that I Corps had no other alternative but to resort to a passive defence. This is a false assertion, if we take into account the resources available to I Corps

> vis-à-vis the Indians. I Corps had nine tank regiments in all as against six Indian tank regiments in Shakargarh Bulge. Further 17th Division was not utilised at all to do anything throughout the war. In Chhamb, with just a slight numerical superiority and qualitative inferiority in tanks and parity in infantry, General Eftikhar wrestled the initiative from Indians in such a manner that by 10th December the Indians had withdrawn one battalion from 168 Brigade in the 'X Force Sector' opposite Charwa in I Corps area and had placed the same brigade at few hours notice to move to Chhamb in view of 23rd Division's attack at Pallanwala. The Pakistani GHQ's strategy in Shakargarh was reactive rather than proactive, and all initiative despite numerical superiority in amour was surrendered to the Indians. A strategy involving a more offensive posture would have forced the overcautious Indians to resort to the defensive. It was here that we enter the realm of military talent. There was no general officer in I Corps with the operational talent or resolution of an Eftikhar; and this finally was the singular misfortune of Pakistan's I Corps. Till ceasefire five armoured regiments were kept on sentry duty in Pasrur area and were not utilised. The saying that a pessimist sees a calamity in every opportunity can be exactly applied to I Corps conduct of battle in Shakargarh Bulge.

A small clarification needs to be added to this highly critical, yet accurate account. The 17th Division was not left unutilised. In orders of the jittery corps GOC, the division's brigades were scattered to reinforce other positions and perhaps one brigade was available to accompany Pakistan 1st Armoured Division. Further, the division was not – in Indian terms at least – ready for war due to its very short time in service. This in no way excuses the fearful slackness of GOC Pakistan I Corps: Major Amin and Brigadier Effendi were correct that his job was to attack by any means necessary. He did not do this and deserved Hamadoor Rehman's opprobrium.

Indian Deployments

Battalions, regiments and brigades are always shifting brigades as required by the situation. The following is only a snap shot, as close as possible, to the original ORBAT of the brigades. The source is mainly the official Indian history. East of Shakargarh, the original intent was to gain depth for Indian positions against a surprise Pakistani attack. However, once it became clear Pakistan would not launch an offensive there, the objective was changed to Shakargarh, particularly as 39th Division was assigned as its primary objective was in trouble.

The 36th Division included only two weak brigades as their elements were re-deployed elsewhere. Of what was still available, the 18th Infantry Brigade remained idle in the Lassian Enclave: the 87th Brigade arrived as a reinforcement only towards the end of the war. The 87th Brigade of 39th Division had hitherto deployed defensively. It was now given to 36th Division for an attack on Shakargarh. It had a single battalion and 3/9th Gurkhas failed due to not receiving tank support: the armour got bogged down in the Bein River. Pakistan had some tanks, perhaps less than a squadron, of 33rd Cavalry easily available. Pakistan inflicted 'heavy casualties' and a number of Gurkhas were taken prisoner. No other details ever became available.[2]

Table 18: 36th Division, Indian Army, Shakargarh Sector, December 1971 (incomplete ORBAT)

Units	Notes
36th Infantry Division	Major-General Balwant Singh Ahhluwalia
18th Infantry Brigade	
• 14th Horse	
87th Brigade	reinforcement towards the end of the war
• 3/9th Gurkhas	
115th Infantry Brigade	
• 4th Grenadiers	
• 1 squadron 14th Horse	
• 87th Infantry	
• 3/9th Gurkha Rifles	
• 14th Rajputana Rifles	
39th Infantry Division[5]	Major-General B. R. Prabhu
2nd Independent Armoured Brigade	Brigadier N. N. Thumby; minus one regiment
• 91st Independent Reconnaissance Squadron	AMX-13
• 1st Dogra	OT-62 TOPAS APCs
• 1st Horse	detached to the 36th Division
• 14th Horse	
• 7th Light Cavalry	
72nd Infantry Brigade	
• 1st Mahar	
• 3rd Sikh Light Infantry	
• 15th Grenadiers	
• 22nd Punjab	

115th Brigade had only 4th Grenadiers. Its reconnaissance was incomplete and there was scant information on enemy defences and numbers. Moreover – neither the official history or Sukhwant are clear – apparently one company had taken losses the night before. Nonetheless, on 13–14 December, B Company (basically, the nonexistent Pakistan defences), located gaps in the small minefield it encountered and signalled the battalion it was safe to advance. The opposition was estimated at two companies and since the position was on the edge of Shakargarh (a built up area), armour – beyond the one troop B Company could identify – was confined.

At first, 4th Grenadiers made progress, but then stalled after 900 metres when a following tank got bogged down and the units' commander refused to proceed without adequate reconnaissance and engineer support. The commander of the unit told his company commanders to withdraw and made his way back to the first base. The company commander kept fighting till around 0700 but was knocked out by an enemy shell splinter and taken prisoner. This is a different story to Sukwant's, according to which, the artillery observer was put out of action.[3]

On repatriation after the war, B/4th Grenadiers' commander said his artillery battery commander and engineer officer abandoned the Grenadiers. The commander of Pakistan 8th Brigade backed the Indian major, while the commander of the 115th Brigade became embroiled in an argument with his division commander over the opposition expected at Shakargarh. 115th Infantry Brigade had been leaning against the Bein from midday on 12 December and knew the local situation. The Indian 115th brigade commander disagreed but was overruled. GOC 36th Division thought the enemy was retreating. He is perhaps, not entirely to blame, as two battalions of 14th Brigade had been shifted to Pakistan 115th Brigade to oppose the offensive of 86th Brigade. In fact, once India signalled its intent to attack from the east, a battalion was sent back to Shakargarh and the lorries that the division believed were evacuating Shakargarh, were actually, reinforcing the town.

Overall, when the Indian tank blew up, the 4th Grenadiers cancelled their attack and the engagement was over. At that point, a reinforced company under Major Chaudhry was sent ahead after 115th Infantry Brigade encountered very light opposition, possibly no more than two companies of paramilitary forces, some elements of the reconnaissance and support battalion, and one armoured squadron. The enemy neither held the Nainakot sector nor mined the Lasian enclave. Only three small minefields were encountered in the advance near the border in three separate locations, astride tracks from the bridgehead to Nainakot.

For unknown reasons, the commander of the 4th Grenadiers did not follow up; instead, he told the advance company to return. On its way back, the company was ambushed by the Pakistanis, and more than 70 Indians became POWs. It was a strange, humiliating and baffling episode. Together with 87th Brigade, now released from its passive defence of the Lassian enclave, even GOC I Corps felt safe from a Pakistani counter-offensive.[4]

Failure of Pakistan's I Corps

On 14 December 1971, Pakistan 124th Brigade (ex 33rd Division, based in Quetta) was given to 8th Division. [6] The bulk of the fighting on Pakistan's side was done by 8th (I) Armoured Brigade on the west and Changez Force on the right. 24th and 115th Brigades were not seriously engaged, except for 24th Brigade sending a battalion to reinforce Shakargarh when the fighting began there at the end of the war. The controlling HQ was Pakistan I Corps, which, fortunately for India in the Chhamb battle, was led by an officer of little initiative and zero propensity to take risks, even to the extent of disobeying GHQ orders. Indeed, the officers under him were so angered by his failure to put up a fight, at the war's end they mutinied, taking him and GOC 6th Armoured Division prisoner.

It is assumed that GOC 17th Division escaped because after detachments were sent to other sectors, this division was left with a much-reduced fighting power. There was even wild talk of marching on Rawalpindi. Had GOC I Corps been aggressive, India could have suffered a major defeat at Chhamb and wider areas. The officers responsible for the mutiny were forced into retirement. Although the loss of Chhamb was seen by India as a catastrophic defeat, India lost only 200km^2 thanks to Pakistan's GOC I Corps lack of willingness to move. Yet, had he done so, India could have lost anywhere between 2–5 times as much territory.

I Corps kept its 6th Armoured and 17th Infantry Divisions in reserve for the Pasrur battle. Several units detached from these two divisions for the assault on Chhamb and returned to the corps because of the Indian I Corps offensive, dooming Pakistan's 23rd Division chances for a major success in Chhamb. This was unnecessary as India was a long way to the east. The intention here is not to second-guess the Pakistan corps commander and the following is repeating what Pakistani critics have said. Two questions arise:

> a) Why did India not build a rail line to Jammu? It had 24 years to do so. Why were secondary roads not built to Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh? The reason is India's usual lassitude, lethargy, short-term thinking and hope that in the event of a crisis, India would somehow muddle through (usual British thinking). However, India had built a secondary road from Akhnoor to Punch, to cover a small part of the Northwest India theatre front. For Leh, a one-ton road was rapidly built after the 1962 War, following the alignment of the old mule track from Mandi to Leh, a two-week journey. Unfortunately, at the best of times, only small convoys could traverse it, at worst, snow shut it for 5–6 months of the year.
>
> b) Given the importance of defending Gurdaspur-Pathankot-Samba, why did Indian I Corps not open its offensive on the night of December 3–4 itself? Why give Pakistan a vital 48-hours for Pakistan to take the initiative? India feared a Pakistani pre-emptive attack and it worried that Pakistan would reply to India's attack by counter-attacking along the line Gurdaspur-Amritsar. This was more reason to open its offensive as soon as possible. Instead of attacking, India deployed a large number of troops defensively, to the extent that five of the 10 brigades available for the offence (including one from XI Corps), were deployed defensively. Less than half the corps participated in the attack.[7]
>
> With four attacking brigades against two defending and being nibbled at by two additional Pakistani brigades defending the extensively fortified Line Zafarwal-Narowal, this became a recipe for failure. Pakistan gained time to shift 124th Brigade northwards from further south and with the end of the Chhamb offensive, 66th Brigade returned to 17th Brigade. Still further, 15th Division to the west of the Bein had four brigades, and 88th Brigade of 17th Division detached to Lahore sector could have returned since Pakistan had sufficient force to defend Lahore. India lost the numerical superiority for a proper offensive even without the geopolitical issues and even with reinforcements from the eastern front.

This showed Indian strategy at its worst. Commanders were trained to passively wait for the enemy to show its hand. The concept of shaping the battlefield by attacking first and maintaining the initiative, so that the enemy must fight India's war, not the other way, was alien. Additionally, there was a strict restriction from Delhi that the army was not to attack first so as to convince a world that India was not the aggressor. It has already been discussed what a counterproductive approach this was, but since mandated by the political leadership, orders had to be followed. Lastly, there was the infamous 'not an inch' order, which prioritised a cautious defence, even if the overall strategy was offensive. This order was political in origin, but all too gladly accepted by the field commanders.

Indian I Corps also planned to draw Pakistan 6th Armoured and 17th Infantry Division east, providing flank coverage for the planned attacked by 26th Division against Sialkot. As mentioned earlier, there was no intention to take Sialkot, but 26th Division was in turn, supposed to protect the flank of 10th Division, which was to push deep into Pakistan (see the the chapter on Chhamb). Overall, the attack on Shakargarh had more than adequate resources. The failure came in I Corps' execution.

India Whittles its Plan

India was to attack the Shakargarh bulge from three axes: northwest (54th Division), northeast (39th Division), and east (36th Infantry Division). It was to seize the line of the Bein Nadi and cross the Nadi in two phases:

1. Advance to the line of the Marala-Ravi Link Canal. This would have enabled 10th Division (paired with 26th Division and led by 3rd (I) Armoured Brigade) to advance past Tanda and turning north, come behind Pakistan positions in south-west Kashmir. Then, in conjunction with 25th Division's attack west, Pakistan's entire position in SW Kashmir would have collapsed, permitting India a major and meaningful strategic victory.
2. Although there was no intention to proceed further north and take NW Kashmir, given time and aggressive commanders, India could have also seized this territory. Even achieving only the Tanda-Pasrur-Narang Mandi line would have created a 40km deep buffer for Indian XV and XI Corps and greatly enhanced India's security in the region. However, like so many disasters for India, this was not to be. Major Amin felt this over impossibly ambitious and he has a point.

Coincidentally, all three divisions of Indian I Corps were part of the four that the post-1962 army expansion earmarked as cadre divisions for expansion in an emergency (the fourth was 57th Division, which fought in the east). The four raised as full divisions from the start, in 1963–1966, and had ample time to train. In true weak Indian style, quite different from the vigorous offensive in the east, two of the three offensives were cancelled after brigades were switched to the defensive for fear of Pakistan attacks against Indian positions. Only five of the nine infantry brigades available were used for the offence and even this was whittled down as the campaign progressed. As a result, not only was the offensive crippled from the start but Indian I Corps got nowhere near the line Narowal-Damtal-Zafarwal. Unequivocally, the major offensive of the war in the west was a failure.

A part of I Corps's dispersal of its offensive potential was directly due to the COAS. While visiting the corps in November, he decided there were insufficient defensive forces in what came to be named as X-Ray sector, between Jammu and Samba, also called Ramgarh sector. This was before the cancellation of the Indian offensive on 1 December. 323rd Brigade from 39th Division was moved to X-Ray Sector. This was a highly improper order: The Army Chief could not arrive and decide where individual brigades should be located, especially since this gravely weakened the attack of Shakargarh.

S area was protected by 26th Division (Minus 33th Brigade sent to Punch) and the division had two brigades and 3rd (I) Armoured Brigade, minus a regiment in the Chhamb Sector. One brigade was committed to the Chicken's Neck offensive, so only one, 168th Brigade at Samba was available to protect against Pakistan 15th Division, defending the area Sialkot to west of the Degh River near Samba. The COAS decided one brigade was insufficient and so ordered another brigade (323rd from 39th Division) to be inserted. That this weakened I Corps' offensive did not concern the COAS, he wanted no ground lost at any cost. Now I Corps was down to eight infantry brigades.

Next, GOC I Corps decided that the eastern part of the Shakargarh bulge, covered by 36th Division, was too exposed to a Pakistan attack. Forgetting that his offensive would vitiate any chance of Pakistan launching an offensive here and that 36th Division was to attack, not defend, the GOC ordered 87th Brigade of 39rd Division to 36th Division. This left 39th Division with nothing to attack or defend. He then ordered 72nd Brigade of 36th Division to join 39th Division. It is unclear why he did not let 87th Brigade stay with its own division and keep 72th Brigade with its parent 36th Division. He went on to order 87th and 18th Brigades to defend, again forgetting that if three brigades were to attack Shakargarh,

A pair of Centurions of either the 16th Poona Horse or 17th Horse, during a pre-war exercise. (Albert Grandolini collection)

Table 19: 54th Division, X Sector and 36th Division, Indian Army, December 1971

Units	**Notes**
54th Infantry Division	Major-General W. A. G. Pinto
• 6th Madras	divisional reserve
16th Independent Armoured Brigade	Brigadier A. S. Vaidya
• 90th Armoured Reconnaissance Squadron	AMX-13s
• 4th Horse	Centurions
• 16th Poona Horse	Centurions
• 17th Horse	Centurions
• 16th Rajputana Rifles	OT-62 TOPAS APCs
47th Infantry Brigade	Brigadier P. P. Bahadwarij
• 3rd Grenadiers	
• 6th Madras	
• 16th Madras	
74th Infantry Brigade	Brigadier Ujaggar Singh
• 6th Kumaon	
• 8th Grenadiers	
• 9th Maratha Light Infantry	
91st Infantry Brigade	Brigadier A. A. Handoo
• 3rd Garhwal	
• 3/1st Gurkha Rifles	
41st Independent Artillery Brigade	
X Sector	latter assumed by HQ 39th Division
• 31st Independent Artillery Brigade	
• 323rd Infantry Brigade	
36th Division	Major-General Balwant Singh Ahluwalia
• 18th Brigade	Brigadier Prithvi Raj
• 115th Infantry Brigade	Brigadier Hriday Kaul

defended by a single Pakistan brigade, no one would be attacking him. Now the offensive was cut to five brigades.

GOC I Corps was so paranoid about a hypothetical Pakistan attack – which had four brigades including the ad hoc Changez force defending the line Zafarwal-Narowal against the entire Indian corps of three divisions and two large independent armoured brigades – that once operations were underway, he wanted a brigade from the 54th Division (already attacking), pulled back to form a reserve for the division to protect against a hypothetical Pakistan attack He then told GOC-in-C Western Command, that since 39th Division had only one brigade to attack, it was best used for the defence and that the offensive should be cancelled. Further, he said, there was no point to 36th Division attacking with a single brigade, so he might as well cancel that attack also. This would have left two brigades of 5th4 Division to carry the whole weight of a corps attack.

The GOC-in-C Western Command was a mild-mannered officer but had had enough of his corps commander's jitters about a Pakistan offensive and he firmly refused[8]. Thus, India was saved from the ridiculous sight of its major offensive in the west being conducted by two brigades. GOC-in C Western Command was so gentlemanly an officer that his memoirs reflect only a mild irritation with his corps commander, who was doing his best to end the offensive straight away. All GOC-in-C Western Command said was 'I felt the that the corps commander was unduly worried about his flanks, and that the best way to stop the enemy mounting any attacks was to assume the offensive and put him on the defence.'

In his defence, GOC Indian I Corps felt he had to be cautious as he was entrusted with the security of the vital Pathankot-Jammu road. This is a weak excuse as he had until 1 December to execute an offensive plan. Surprisingly, GOC Western Command did not stop him crippling the corps' offensive which he was totally committed to and remained so even after he was told he could attack first.

Aims of the Offensive

India aimed to capture Zafarwal using 54th Division and 16th Independent Armoured Brigade attacking from the northwest and 36th Division with 2nd Independent Armoured Brigade aimed for Shakargarh, taking a northeast axis. 54th Division operated between the Degh River and the Karar Nullah; 36th Division was between the Karar Nullah and Shakargarh.

36th Division provided a buffer against any Pakistan attempt to attack from the east, 39th and 54th Divisions were to turn west for Pasrur and with Indian XV Corps (10th and 26th Divisions), encircle and destroy Pakistan I Corps. All this was seemingly defensively, as India would not admit to acting offensively. With Pakistan I Corps out of the war, the way into Kashmir was wide open.

Things Going Wrong

In the case of the Second Battle of Shakargarh, it soon became obvious that things were going wrong. Due to excessive caution, GOC reduced 39th Division's attack by half, to 72nd Brigade alone. Was not GOC I Corps aware this would wreck his entire plan forward of Pasrur? He had arrived in October 1971, interpreted his primary mandate to hold the Shakargarh Bulge at all costs and to take no risks. He would not care what had been decided earlier. As it was, he stripped his corps down to four attacking brigades from the nine he had. 8th Division's Narowal was to be taken by Indian XV Corps, which will be discussed in the next volume.

The 54th Division sector lies east of the Degh Nala (seasonal river) to the west of the Bein River. The Basanatar Nala ran between the two. India aimed to take Zafarwal:

a) 54th Division launched from the Samba area between the Degh and Bein Rivers. The Basantar River ran north-south down between these two. With (left to right) 47th

Table 20: 8th Division, Pakistan Army, December 1971	
Units	**Notes**
8th Infantry Division	Major-General Abdul Ali Malik
• 33rd Cavalry	detached to Changez Force
• 21st Baloch	
24th Brigade	Brigadier Sher Ali Baz; Zafarwal Sector
• 11th Baloch	
• 24th Baloch	
• 35th Punjab	
• 40th Punjab	
• 23rd FFR	from 10th Brigade, later detached to 14th Brigade
14th Parachute Brigade[9]	Shakargarh area
• 19th FFR	
• 27th FFR	from 54th Brigade, 15th Division
• 20th Punjab	assigned to 115th Brigade
• 27th Punjab	assigned to 115th Brigade
115th Brigade	Narowal Sector
• 35th Punjab	
• 38th Punjab	
• 20th Punjab	from 14th Brigade
• 27th Punjab	from 14th Brigade
• 34th FFR	
8th Independent Armoured Brigade	Brigadier Mohammed Ahmad
• 13th Lancers	M47s
• 27th Cavalry	M48s
• 31st Cavalry	M48s
• 11th Independent Armoured Squadron	M36
• 29th FFR	M113A1
• 15th Artillery Regiment	M7

and 91st Brigades, 74th Brigade in reserve, in support were 16th (I) Armoured Brigade and 41st (Independent) Artillery Brigade supported. Its immediate objective was Zafarwal-Damtal followed by a right turn to seize Shakargarh, defended by Pakistan 14th Brigade. This brigade was the forward defence against an Indian attack from the east by Indian 36th Division.

b) An east-west lateral fortification line called Sarkor Bund and the triple minefield, ran between the Bein and Basantar. A bund is an earthen fortification; machinegun and recoilless rifle strong points – consisting of concrete bunkers when possible – and were protected by obstacles that included wire and mines. Usually, to build a bund, a ditch is dug and the earth piled up in front. The ditch, which can run to 100-metres wide, is filled with water and obstacles, forcing the attacker to run a double gauntlet.

c) 39th Division was to attack southward on the right flank of 54th Division and capture Shakargarh. All three of its brigades were deployed elsewhere, so it was given 72nd Brigade from 36th Division and 2nd (Independent Armoured Brigade). For some time, it controlled 8th7 Brigade with four infantry battalions. It objective was Shakargarh.

d) 36th Division with two of its brigades, 115th and 18th, plus 87th Brigade of 39th Division were to attack towards Shakargarh from the east.

Pakistani Forces

Pakistan's plan was to give ground, moving west in a retrograde defensive and drawing in the Indian offensive and then, I Corps's

A rare view of an M7 self-propelled howitzer 105mm, as operated by the 15th Artillery Regiment of the Pakistani Army. (Albert Grandolini collection)

A M113A1 armoured personnel carrier of the 7th Battalion, Frontier Force Regiment: the 29th Battalion was also equipped with M113A1s. (Albert Grandolini collection)

Pakistani M36B2s and Experiments with Old Pakistani Pattons[11]

Pakistan received 50 old M36B2 General Jackson tank destroyers from the USA, but nobody in the Pakistani Army knew what to do with them: indeed, until today it remains unclear why were they ever accepted – or even why the USA supplied them. Was Washington cheekily offloading junk on Pakistan? The Pakistanis may agree with this as it was true that Pakistan was not paying. However, somewhere the US Army took a cash credit for the supply, at cost to the US taxpayer. Whilst there is no doubt the M36 with its powerful 90mm gun was useful in the Second World Warit is questionable how much use was it 20–25 years, later.[12]

In 1965, Pakistan used two squadrons of M36 to reinforce two regiments equipped with M4 Shermans that had only two squadrons each. Readers familiar with the conflict will know that after the Sino-Indian 1962 War, the US pivoted to India (it did not work out) and refused to supply further tanks so that Pakistan could at least, match the expanding number of regiments in the Indian Cavalry. Undaunted, Pakistan made one of its famous impulsive compromises –Pakistan took Pattons from its war attrition reserve to form more cavalry regiments. The army lacked crews for them and those that were available, lacked the needed proficiency. This was partly responsible for the failure of its 1st Armoured Division at Khem Karan when the division took a beating. It is also the origin of the oft-repeated story that the Indians captured a large number almost zero-time Pattons.

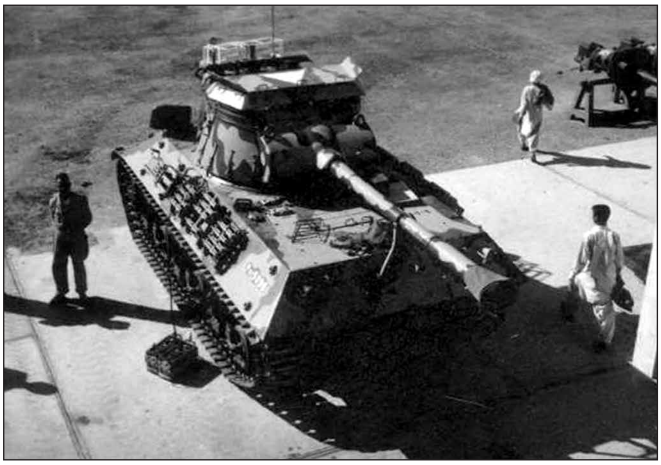
As of 1971, the 40 surviving M36s were kept in reserve and Pakistan again made a compromise by using them to form an ad hoc squadron for deployment to Chhamb. Unsurprisingly, the breakdown rate was high. It is unknown whether this was due to a lack of spares (a known condition) or because of the inadequate proficiency of crew over rough, boggy terrain. Seven were pulled out for Manto Force (Chhamb) and almost all were destroyed. The rest were used by Changez Force in the Shakargarh Salient with 20th Lancers – an M4 regiment.

Before 1971, the sole independent armoured brigade of the Pakistani Army was the 3rd, formed after partition and later, deployed in the Lahore IV Corps sector. Along with the 2nd Independent Armoured Brigade, the 8th Independent Armoured Brigade of the Pakistani Army was formed as a result of 1970 exercises which emphasised the necessity of brigade-sized armour reserves at corps level, to counter-attack Indian offensives without calling on the two armour strike divisions.

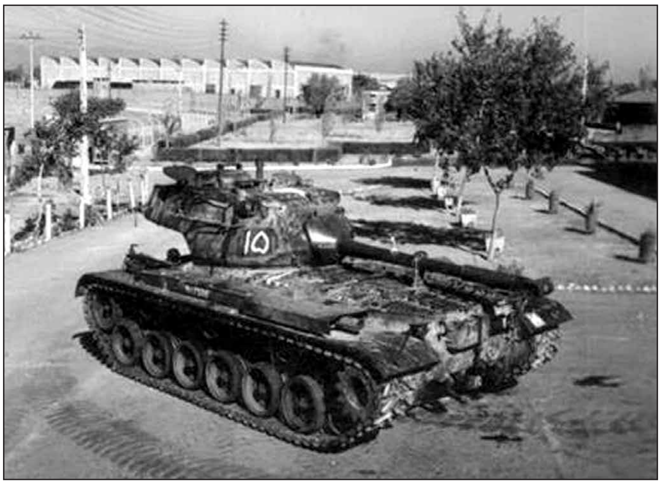
The divisional tank regiments from six infantry divisions were grouped into the two brigades. As discussed earlier, the 2nd Independent Armoured Brigade was assigned to the Chhamb offensive. As Pakistan was very short of resources, it could not raise additional tank regiments. Although the number of regiments remained the same, at least substantial corps level reserves were now available. Had the regiments remained with the infantry divisions, as per India-Pakistan style, they would have been frittered away by assigning a squadron to each brigade and often a troop to a battalion. In the 1965 War, India reached the nadir of armour operations when an Indian corps commander in one case, ordered a troop around (3 tanks) and then went one better by breaking up the troop and ordering a single tank around.[13]

Interestingly, the ad hoc Changez Force formed on 3 December did very well, but the 8th Independent Armoured Brigade – a larger and fully-mechanised unit – did badly. The reason being that the first had an excellent commander, while the commander of the second was limited to stumbling around. Indeed, there is no avoiding some harsh words for the latter: although there was ample institutionalised corruption among Pakistani generals (from which Indian generals did not suffer), India and Pakistan share equal honours for incompetence in the western campaign.

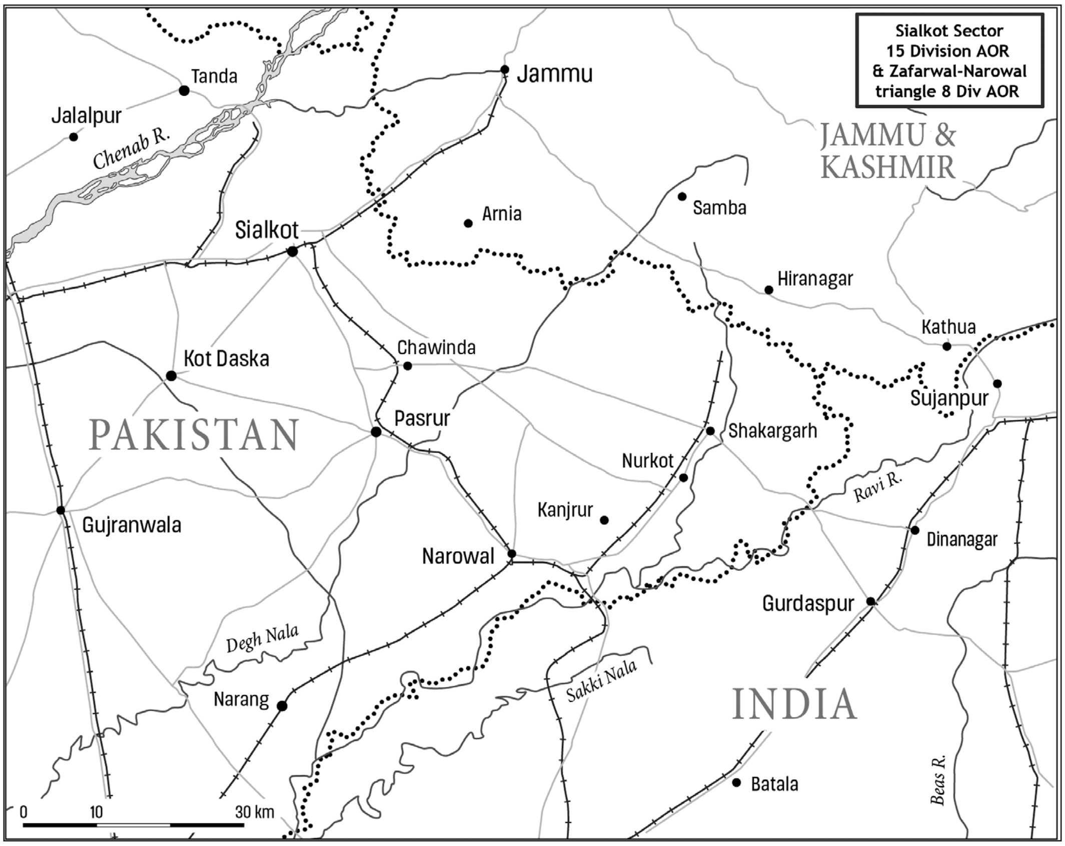
A captured Pakistani M4 Sherman tank, equipped with a 76mm gun. (Albert Grandolini collection)



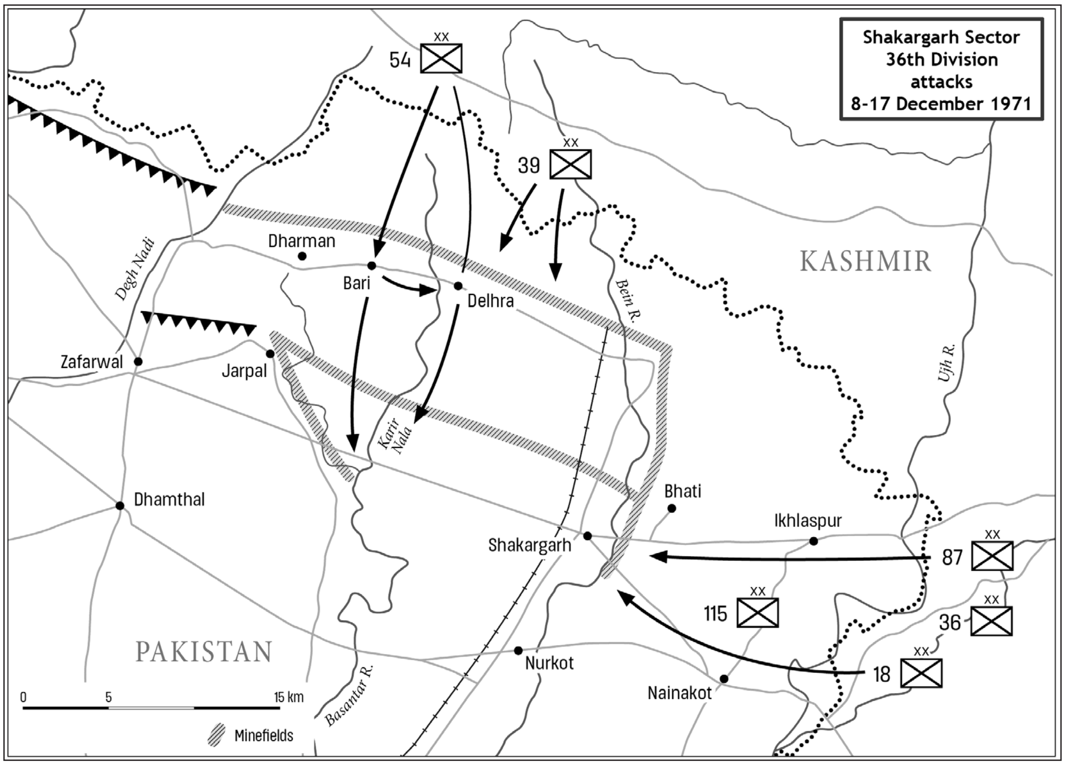
A rare photograph of an M36B2 of the Pakistani Army. As of 1971, most were assigned to the 11th Independent Armoured Squadron. (Albert Grandolini collection)



A poor, but highly interesting photo of a Pakistani M47 as of 1971. Notable is the disruptive camouflage pattern, but also the typical turret number (15), applied in white. (Albert Grandolini collection)


Sialkot Sector
15 Division AOR
& Zafarwal-Narowal
triangle 8 Div AOR
Tanda
Jammu
Jalalpur
Chenab R.
JAMMU & KASHMIR
Arnia
Samba
Sialkot
Hiranagar
Kathua
Chawinda
Kot Daska
Sujanpur
PAKISTAN
Pasrur
Shakargarh
Nurkot
Ravi R.
Kanjrur
Gujranwala
Narowal
Dinanagar
Gurdaspur
Degh Nala
Sakki Nala
Narang
INDIA
Batala
Beas R.
0
10
30 km

A map of the Sialkot Sector, the Shakargarh Salient, and the Zafarwal-Narowal Triangle. (Map by Micky Hewitt)


Shakargarh Sector
36th Division
attacks
8-17 December 1971
XX
54
XX
39
KASHMIR
Dharman
Bari
Delhra
Degh Nadi
Bein R.
Zafarwal
Jarpal
Karir Nala
Ujh R.
Bhati
Dhamthal
Ikhlaspur
Shakargarh
XX
87
XX
115
XX
36
PAKISTAN
Nurkot
XX
18
Nainakot
Basantar R.
0
5
15 km
Minefields

General plan of the Indian offensive into the Shakargarh Salient, with Indian Army divisional de-lineation. Essentially, major units were:
54th Division (deployed between Degh Nadi and the Basanter Nullah and aiming for Zafarwal).
39th Division (deployed between Basanter and the Bein River and aiming for Shakargarh),
36th Division (deployed between the border and the Ravi River). (Map by Micky Hewitt)

strike divisions, 6th Armoured and 17th Infantry, would counter-attack. 8th Division deployed in linear fashion north to south in a reverse triangle, with 14th Brigade at Shakargarh at the division reserve and with 8th (I) Armoured Brigade also in reserve around Chiwanda. Further to the west, 15th Division covered Sialkot against Indian 26th Division.

The 124th Brigade was attached from 33rd Division in the desert on 14 December. The reason for this is not clear, but almost immediately, the brigade was sent back to 33rd Division to participate in Pakistan II Corps' offensive. On 3 December 1971, a few hours before the onset of hostilities, the Army Headquarters of Pakistan decided that the 8th Division required further reinforcement. Thus, Brigadier Nisar, one of Pakistan's best commanders, was pulled from a secondary job and sent to take charge of the ad hoc, brigade-sized Changez Force. He was given two jeeps, two radio sets, one telephone exchange and staff of one major and two captains who arrived between 6 and 8 December.[10]

Moreover, despite eight months of warning, the GHQ only managed to raise the HQ Changez Force on 3 December 1971: the communication between its two armoured regiments was impossible because they used entirely different radios (indeed: one was equipped with systems no longer in service anywhere in the world) and M47 tanks were actually past their mechanical lives and kept operational 'on life support'. The operational commander – Brigadier Nisar – was rushed to his new position from a training job just as the artillery of his command was about to fire its opening volleys. Additionally, the 13th Punjab had next to no experience in cooperation with tanks.

Indian Assault on Shakargarh

Despite history sometimes oversimplifying complex battles, it must not be forgotten that this was a multi-phase battle. The Indian plan was to attack with two divisions in a north-south line, along the grain of the country. The 54th Division aimed for Zafarwal and 39th for Shakargarh. Additionally, 86th Infantry Brigade of 15th Infantry Division was to attack Narowal. This

Table 21: 8th Independent Armoured, 14th and 24th Infantry Brigades, Pakistan Army, December 1971

Units	Notes
8th Independent Armoured Brigade	guarded Supwal (Sarkpr Bund)
• 11th Baluch and 20th Lancers	Supwal-Rupo Chack
• 24th Baluch, 20th Lancers, 11th Independent Squadron	Gazipur-Tharpal
• 35th Punjab and 33rd Cavalry	Tala-Burawal-Chaka
• 40th Punjab and squadron of 13th Lancers	
14th Infantry Brigade	Shakargarh
• 19th FFR	Chate-Amine and Sukha-Chank
• 27th Punjab	Magra-Antonwali; later detached to 115th Brigade
• 20th Punjab	Nurkot-Shakargarh; later detached to 115th Brigade
• 31st Cavalry	Nurkot-Shakargarh

covered the reverse wedge, Shakargarh to Zafarwal, Zafarwal to Narowal and Narowal to Zafarwal. To the west, across the river, lay Pasrur, a primary intermediate objective, en route to the line Lahore-Sialkot and Lahore-Gujrat. It can be strategically regarded as the heart of Pakistan North Punjab.

While the 8th Independent Armoured Brigade guarded Supwal (i.e. Sarkpr Bund) and Shakargarh – together with the 24th Infantry Brigade and the 20th Lancers – the 31st Cavalry was protecting the second minefield. This dispersal of five or six tank squadrons to support four infantry battalions, instead of keeping the armour together for a strong counter-attack, was typical of Indian, but not of Pakistani, deployment of armour. Unsurprisingly, with Indian Army deploying double the number of armoured regiments and one of three regiments it was facing being equipped with old M4 Shermans, the GOC Western Command anticipated no great difficulty.

The Battle of Basantar/Barapind/Jarpal

The resulting battle is known under three different names, as the battle of Basantar, Barapind or Jarpal – usually depending on what area is used as reference. A clear delineation and presentation of a straight picture of some aspects is difficult to discern, one problem being that different participants casually recalled different villages without providing further clarification, another being the lack of contemporary maps and additionally, that this was actually a part of three different divisional campaigns, run in a sequence: first by one brigade of the 39th Division, then by two brigades of the 36th Division and then by three brigades of the 54th Division. Correspondingly, the following reconstruction is anything other than the 'final word'.

39th Division[14]

To the east of the Basantar River, 39th Division with just 72nd Brigade (from the 36th Division) and the 2nd Armoured Brigade (minus some elements) attacked on 4 December, aiming for Shakargarh.

A M4 Sherman of the Pakistani Army, upgraded through the installation of a 76mm gun, as seen during a pre-war exercise. The type was an unpleasant surprise for Indian units equipped with M4s during the 1965 War, but obsolete in 1971. (Albert Grandolini collection)

T-54 tanks of the Indian Army, shown while equipped with KMT mine-rollers, used to clear lanes through minefields. The 7th Cavalry of the 2nd Armoured Brigade had three such vehicles available in December 1971. (Albert Grandolini collection)

The division was short of two infantry brigades due to the Army HQ strategy emphasising defence that was enthusiastically adopted by GOC I Corps. A full division would have made a relatively easy advance to Shakargarh, especially if 36th Division attacked from Pathankot side. Instead, 72nd Brigade promptly stalled on 7 December when it hit a minefield at Harrar Kalan, protected by a well-fortified position held by just one Pakistani company and perhaps, a platoon. The Indian attack failed with 89 casualties including 24 KIA due to bad planning. Although there was ample artillery support, no one thought it necessary to prepare for clearing lanes through a minefield.

The HQ 39th Division moved about 1,800 metres east, but somewhat lackadaisically and so did not reach its new position till late afternoon of 8 December. The 2nd Armoured Brigade had a mine clearance troop with three T-54s of the 7th Cavalry, equipped with Soviet-made KMT-mine-rollers. Two tanks passed through, the third blew up an old mine. Not wishing to be exposed at night to Pakistani tank hunting parties, the GOC ordered the two tanks to drop their precious trawls, remain where they were and instructed the trawls to be brought back. This could not be achieved, so the trawls were abandoned – despite not even minimal opposition.[15]

On 9 December, the trawls were recovered and an attack on Harrar Kalan planned for that night. However, this was postponed to 10–11 December so the 39th Division could stay abreast of the 54th Division to the west, following GOC I Corps conception of how the overall battle was to be fought. It is rather surprising that the attack on Harrar Kalan was successful – although it should have been, given the disparity in force – as the attack stalled on another minefield. Eight days into the war, there now seemed only a dim prospect of reaching Shakargarh. Certainly, the 39th Division had advanced, but only four kilometres; this definitely, was not India's finest hour. GOC I Corps cancelled the offensive.

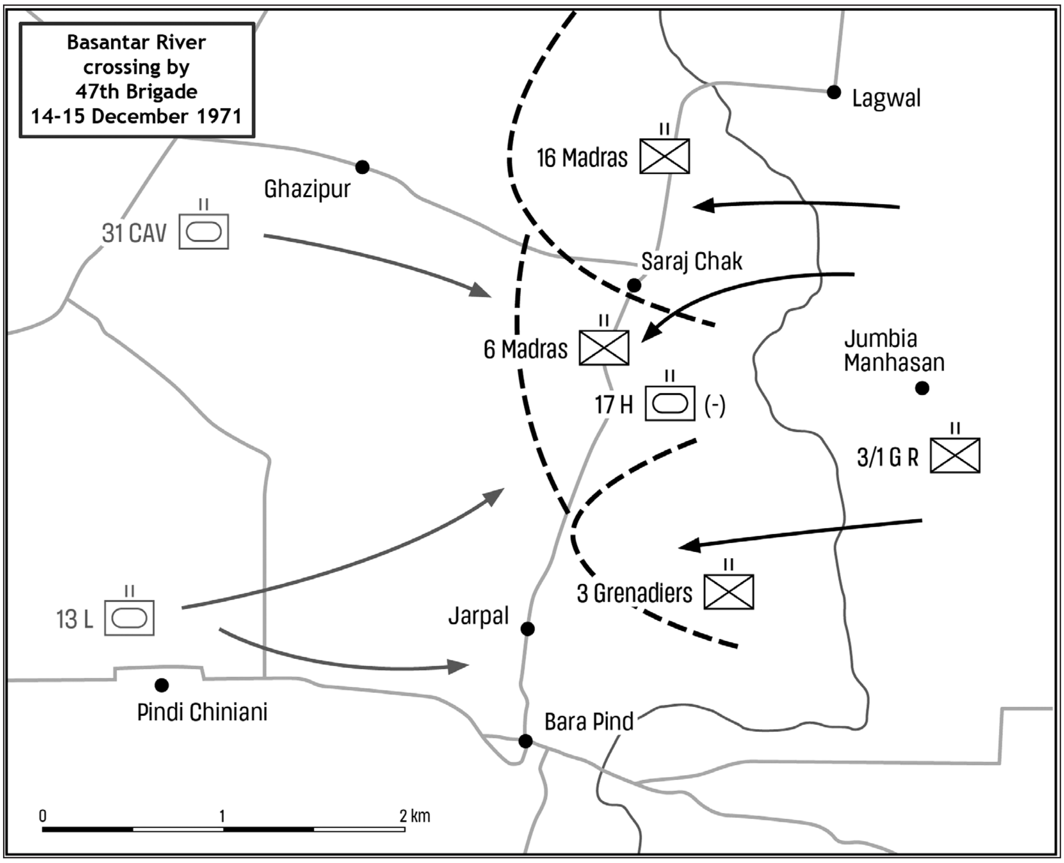
Barapind – Jarpal[16]

When Indian 47th Brigade along with 9th Engineer Regiment (404th, 405th, and 406th Field Squadron) bridged the Basantar on the night of 16 December, Pakistan counter attacked with 8th Armoured Brigade using 20th Lancers and 31st Cavalry. As the counter-attack was hurriedly launched without forethought, it failed and Pakistan was saved by the ceasefire of 17 December.

The 20th Lancers was an I Corps reconnaissance regiment, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Said Ahmed Mahmood. It had only 35 tanks including three squadrons of three troops each (as opposed to the usual four) and a rifle reconnaissance troop. The 31st Cavalry had the full complement of 41 tanks in three squadrons, for a total of 45 (including command vehicles). Unfortunately, the commander of the C Squadron, 20th Lancers lost his nerve and abandoned his position without orders, from the defence line on the northern border. The brigade commander and the regimental commander rushed to the border before he reached the second minefield line and forced him to return to his position, with a regimental officer superimposed on him. Surprisingly, later the defaulting officer was promoted all the way to three-star general. In many Indian accounts, he is mentioned as 'retreating under the fire of the 72nd Brigade'.

74th and 91st Brigades[17]

At 2000 hours in the evening of 5 December, the 74th and 91st Brigades crossed the border. 74th Brigade (8th Grenadiers leading, followed by 6th Kumaon and 9th Maratha) hit 11th Baluch and tanks of 20th Lancers, knocked out one tank and captured another 47th Brigade (16th Madras) the division's third brigade, captured Dodwan Kalan as planned, in the night from 7 to 8 December. To the right, a task force of a company of 18th Rajputana Rifles (Mechanised) and a squadron of 17th Horse made a mounted assault on Ghamrola but until Dehlra[18] and Charkra were reduced, operations could not resume. The Indian position at Dodwan Kalan


Basantar River crossing by 47th Brigade 14-15 December 1971
Lagwal
16 Madras
Ghazipur
31 CAV
Saraj Chak
6 Madras
Jumbia Manhasan
17 H (-)
3/1 G R
3 Grenadiers
13 L
Jarpal
Pindi Chiniani
Bara Pind
0
1
2 km

Crossing of the Basantar River by the Indian 47th Brigade of the 54th Division, and counterattacks by two Pakistani armoured battalions, on 14-15 December 1971. (Map by Micky Hewitt)

position was under Pakistani fire from the Dehlra, a strong point defended by an infantry company and a tank squadron. Due to 39th Division's failure to clear Delhra/Chakra, 54th Division was ordered to do the job. Indian histories do not explain who and what was to stage a possible Pakistani counter-attack that needed guarding against.

The division, taking over from the hapless 39th Division, attacked Dehlra and Chakra during the night from 10 to 11 December and took the two positions by the day of 11 December with 6th Kumaon and 8th Grenadiers. 8th Grenadiers supported by 4th Horse attacked Chakra using an indirect approach.

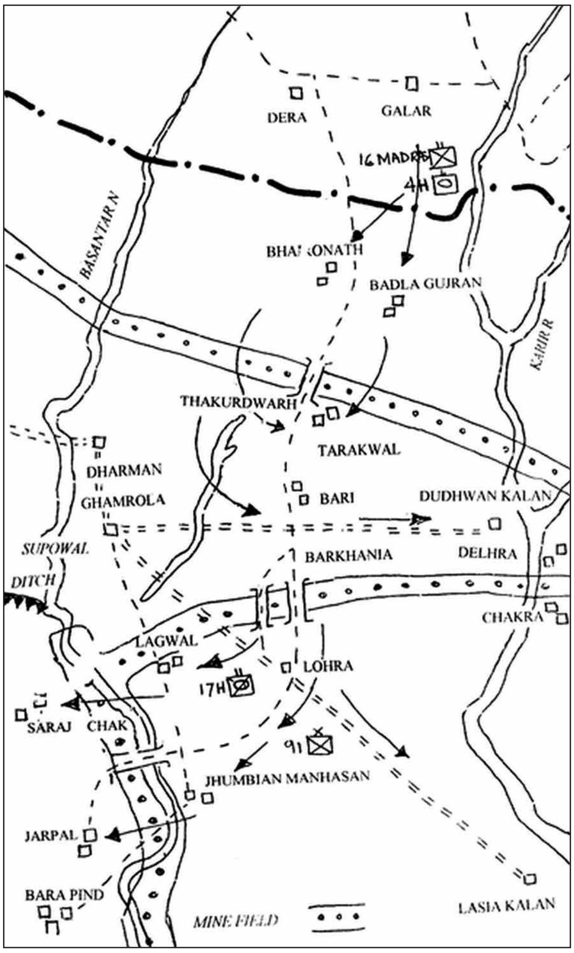
91st Infantry Brigade was given the task of exploiting further south. However, its supporting elements and vehicle column came to a halt at around 2030 hours on 13 December when they hit a minefield running from Chakra via Barkhania to Lagwal. 17th Horse assisted in establishing a bridgehead across this minefield by breaching two lanes. The Engineer task forces based on 404 and 405th Field Companies ex 9th Engineer Regiment and 372nd Field Company (from the 5th Engineer Regiment) were allotted this task.

It should be kept in mind that the Pakistani triple minefield did not run in straight lines from west to east. It had many extensions, one case being a second minefield running in part from Chakra to Lagowal, the field then turned 90-degrees south along the Basantar. The Basantar had little water at this time of the year. Not only were the days short but morning mist obscured visibility, and dust haze add to the problem.

Next, the division sent 47th Brigade across the Basantar and resumed the advance. India by chance or design, hit the spot where an R and S Company defended a gap between two infantry battalions and the Pakistanis withdrew. By then the ceasefire was declared.

In contrast to 39th Division, 54th Division operated near flawlessly. It was a slow advance but it was a steady one, that at times had to keep abreast of 39th Division. Possibly the division could have moved faster, but it was limited by HQ I Corps orders not to leave open flanks. On the night of 5–6 December, the division took several outposts in the border. Pakistan defended with a squadron each of 20th Lancers and 33rd Cavalry, accompanied by infantry.

47th Brigade was across the border at 2000 hrs 6 December, with 16th Madras and tanks of 4th Horse. It encountered and overcame its first obstacle just north of the first minefield, but the minefield stopped further progress. In a dust haze at last light, 405th Engineer Company along with 16th Armoured Brigade trawl troop, then breached the first minefield at Thakurdward. The job was completed in one hour in poor visibility at last light, In one hour, it created a 5 by 500 metre gap. Thakurdward was attacked by 16th Madras


DERA
GALAR
16 MADRAS
4H
BASANTAR N
BHAI KONATH
BADLA GUJRAN
KAIRIR R
THAKURDWARH
TARAKWAL
DHARMAN
GHAMROLA
BARI
DUDHWAN KALAN
SUPOWAL DITCH
BARKHANIA
DELHRA
CHAKRA
LAGWAL
LOHRA
17H
SARAJ CHAK
91
JHUMBIAN MANHASAN
JARPAL
BARA PIND
MINE FIELD
LASIA KALAN

Map hand drawn by Major Amin. It does not show where two of the five infantry battalions were located.

A T-54 of the Indian Army, as seen while relatively well-concealed by bamboo and tree branches –it is possibly how tankers operating Centurion Mk 7s of the 17th Horse were waiting for the 13th Lancers to approach, on 16 December 1971. (Albert Grandolini collection)

An M47 of the 13th Lancers, hit and afire after running into well-concealed positions of T-54s of the 17th Horse. (Albert Grandolini collection)

Indian troops inspecting another M47 knocked out during the failed attack on the Indian bridgehead in the Basanter area on 16 December 1971. (Albert Grandolini collection)

supported by two squadrons of 4th Horse and was in Indian hands by 2230 hours.

The next objective was Bari. The Commander of 47th Infantry Brigade, which had moved to Thakurdward, ordered a combat group to Bari but by 0130 hours 7 December, the tanks had become bogged down in a nala. However, all except two tanks were extricated and the combat group attacked Bari from the west. The enemy were completely surprised by the speed and direction of the attack and retreated. The bridgehead was enlarged by the capture of Dudhwan Kalan by 16th Madras with the support of 17th Horse on the night of December 7–8. A squadron of 17th Horse, along with a company of 18th Rajputana Rifles, launched a mounted assault and captured Ghamrola.

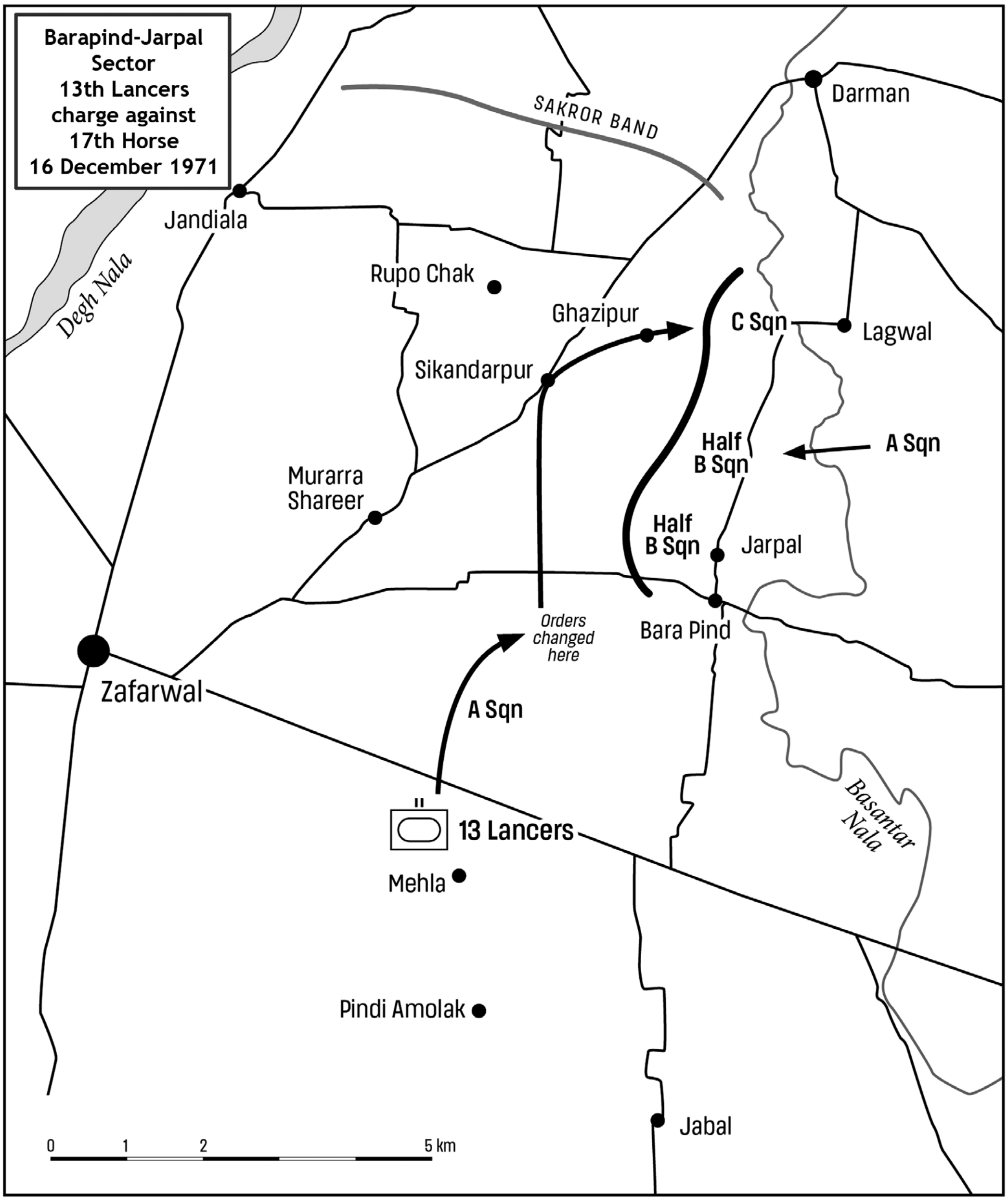
The next step was the crossing of the Basantar which went as follows:

- 16th Madras were to lead the assault across Basantar Nadi to capture Saraj Chak and Lalial
- 3rd Grenadiers were to follow and capture Jarpal and Lohal. 6th Madras and 17th Horse, after the minefield was breached, were to occupy the gap including Gazipur Reserve Forest between 16th Madra and 3rd Grenadiers. They were to expand the bridgehead after first light.

16th Madras attacked without breaching the minefield at 1930 hrs on 15 December and after sharp action during which the battalion suffered 27 KIA and 82 WIA, captured all four objects by 2330, despite several counterattacks. 3rd Germanders attacked at Jarpal at 2130 hrs and quickly took its objective. Half way through, 405th Engineer Company breached a vehicle safe line and Pakistan tanks at Ghazipur began moving towards 16th Madras. In a bold move, C/17 was ordered to assault anyway. Fortunately, no tanks were lost.

Not Moving: the Pakistani 24th Infantry Brigade

With five battalions plus two tank regiments, ample artillery and reserves at Pasrur, Pakistan could have destroyed the Indian 54th Division attack. Why it did not is not clear in the material available: from bits and pieces of information that can be collected from many sources, a composite picture of Pakistan's failure can be constructed, but this is not the full picture.



A map reconstructing the first action by the 13th Lancers on 16 December 1971. (Map by Micky Hewitt)

Table 22: 24th Infantry Brigade, Pakistan Army, December 1971	
Units	**Notes**
24th Infantry Brigade	Brigadier Sher Ali Baz; HQ Zafarwal
• 11th Baloch	
• 24th Baloch	
• 35th Punjab	
• 40th Punjab	
• 23rd FFR	from 10th Brigade, later detached to 14th Brigade

I Corps leadership was entirely passive and it appears I Corps was ‘saving’ itself for the right moment. There is nothing wrong with conserving resources for a counter-offensive at the right time, but sitting passively is not a recommended strategy. Once it became clear Indian troops were to cross the Basantar River (12 December), I Corps should have struck. Instead, it defined its line of no penetration as the Bein River to the west of Zafarwal. Indian 54th Division was very vulnerable to a smashing counter-attack while it crossed the Basantar.

Neither GOC 8th Division nor commander 24th Brigade seem to have been energetic leaders. When Pakistan 8th (I) Armoured Brigade (Pasrur) did attack, it was in a disjointed manner. The Indian troops were in top form with good battalion, brigade and division leaders and easily destroyed 8th IAB’s counter-offensive.

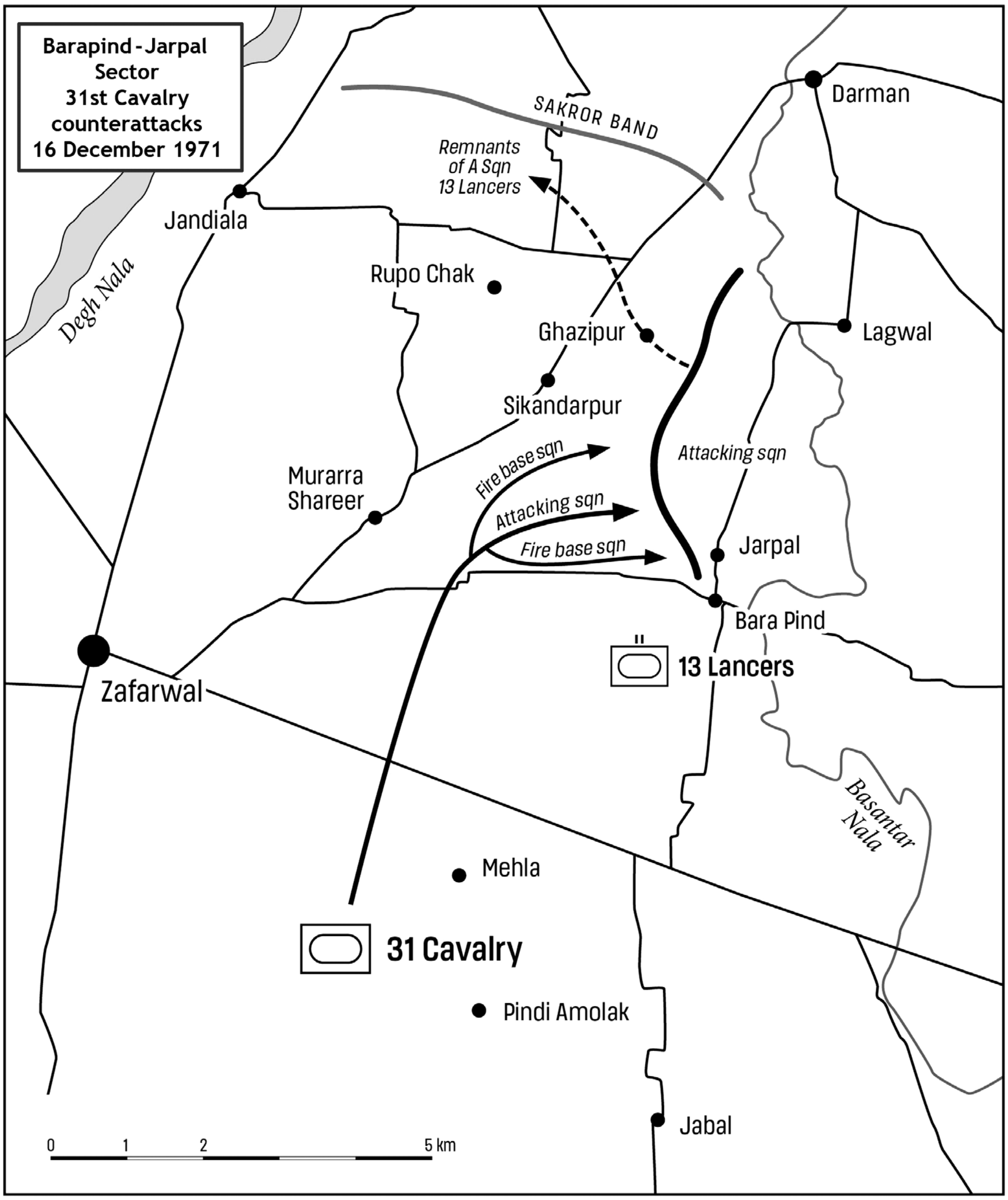
Zafarwal town was held by 40th Punjab; 11th Baluch held the front from the interdivisional boundary with 15th Division through Gharmola and onto the Karar Nadi, 24th Punjab the southern end of the Basntar, in the middle a R and S company of 21st Baluch.

Battle of Chakra: Indian Reconstruction

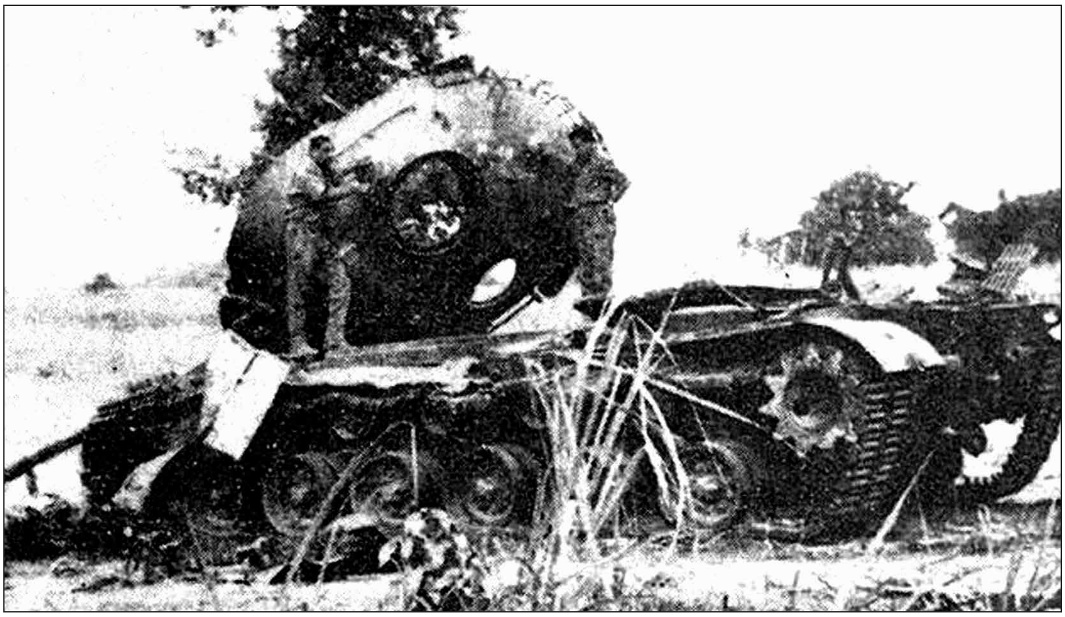
On 16 December, after pootling around for 10 days ignoring the Indian advance, the higher Pakistan command awoke to the danger. The 8th Independent Armoured Brigade issued a warning order that an infantry battalion and a tank squadron were in a bridgehead to the west of the Basanter. The headquarters of the 24th Brigade took this to be that one infantry company and one tank troop had crossed. This differing perception may have mattered because the two brigades were coordinating their action, but there is no evidence for how this was the case. The 8th Independent Armoured Brigade then ordered two squadrons of the 13th Lancers northwards for a counter-attack. As this was a hasty attack, the 13th Lancers did not prepare and although there were about 90 artillery guns in range or easily available, the fire support was inadequate.

Later, the commander of this unit said he was told to attack at all costs in view of the urgency of the situation, but apparently, the commander of the 8th Independent Armoured Brigade gave no such order. Unsurprisingly, the 13th Lancers lost eight tanks to broadsides of the Indian 17th Horse. For some reason, the commander of the 13th Lancers decided on his own, to continue the attack to the north, losing another 20 tanks.

Next, 31st Cavalry was launched. It proceeded professionally, with one squadron up and two supporting fire. This did not work either, in part because the Pakistanis faced 4th Horse and 17th Horse


Barapind - Jarpal Sector
31st Cavalry counterattacks
16 December 1971
Sakror Band
Darman
Remnants of A Sqn 13 Lancers
Jandiala
Degh Nala
Rupo Chak
Ghazipur
Lagwal
Sikandarpur
Fire base sqn
Attacking sqn
Attacking sqn
Fire base sqn
Murarra Shareer
Jarpal
Bara Pind
13 Lancers
Zafarwal
Basantar Nala
Mehla
31 Cavalry
Pindi Amolak
Jabal
0
1
2
5 km

Counterattacks of the 31st Cavalry on 16 December 1971. (Map by Micky Hewitt)



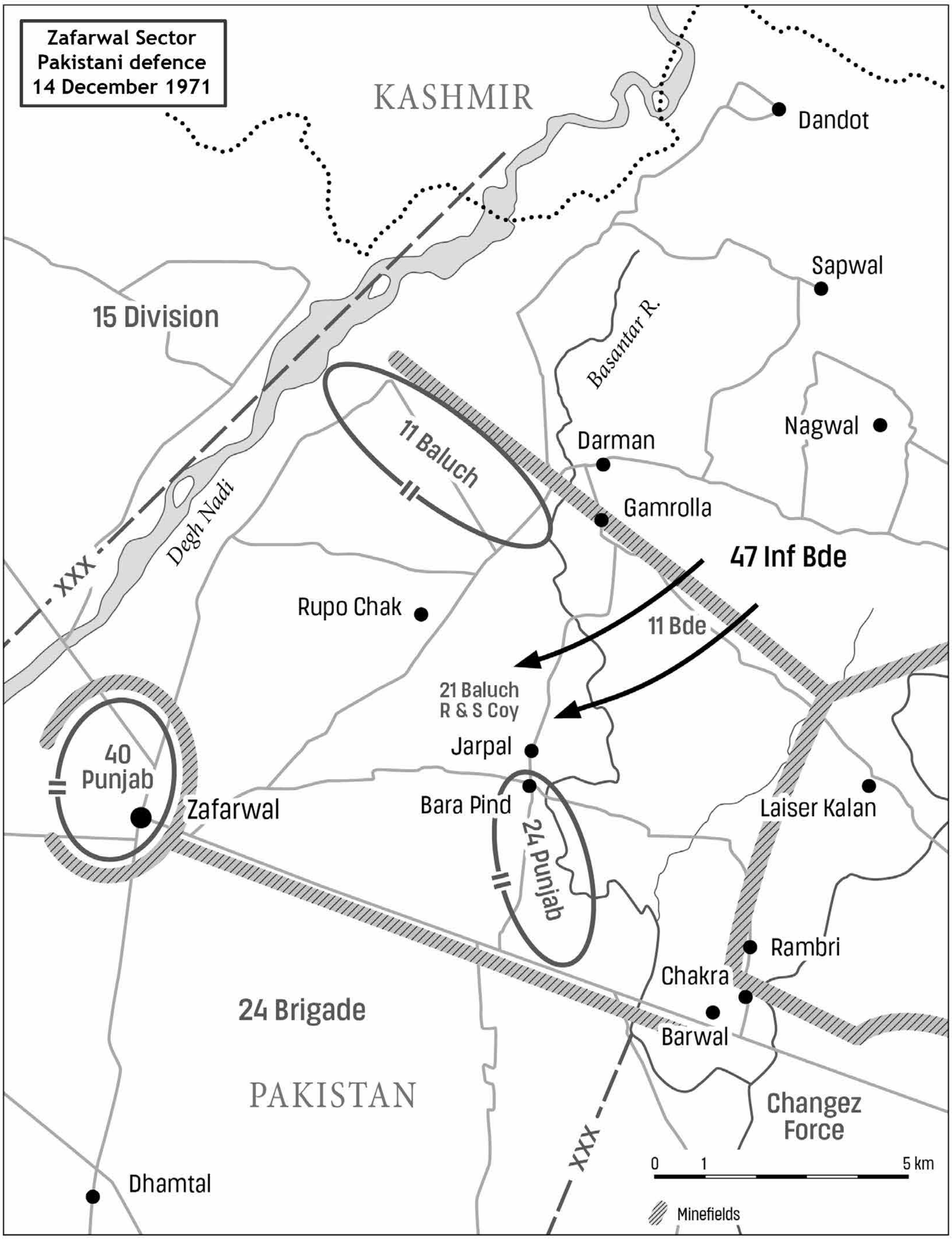
A completely destroyed M48A1 of the 31st Lancers, seen while under inspection by Indian troops. (Albert Grandolini collection)

(two of the Indian cavalry's best regiments) and the leading squadron lost 10 of 14 tanks.[19] Despite these setbacks, 8th IAB and 24th Brigades prepared a joint attack for the morning of the 17 December with a reinforcement of 27th Cavalry from 8th IAB and by 35th FF, newly arrived after being forced to wander over half Pakistan. India claims 124th Brigade attacked, but there is no evidence. Overall, more tanks than the 38 mentioned here, were lost.

The famous action for which Lieutenant Arun Khetrapal, a newly minted office, was awarded a posthumous Param Vir Chakra, took place at Jarpal. Here, CO 17th Horse, determined to stay one step of the defence, sent two tank troops defending Jarpal and 3rd Grenadiers in the bridgehead forward, even though the vehicle safe lane was only half cleared. In the meantime, the balance of 17th Horse, 6th Madras Grenadiers and a mechanised company of 18th Rajputana Rifles crossed to the west of the Basantar.

Arun's troop was one of the two. He rushed into action heedless of the mine danger: before soon, three of his tanks were non-operational. His immediate commander in charge of the two tank troops ordered him to withdraw however, the young subaltern refused, saying his gun was still working. He knocked out three or four tanks and the other tanks in the troop, along with the second troop, brought the total to 10. In turn, Arun's tank took four hits; the last killed him. Pakistan accepts Arun stopped the attack of 13th Lancers against the Indian bridgehead and praised his suicidal defence. Just as India praised the 35th FFR's attack that wiped out the unit.

Although Pakistan 8th IAB planned an attack on 17 December along the line of the Basantar, given the severe


Zafarwal Sector
Pakistani defence
14 December 1971
KASHMIR
Dandot
Sapwal
15 Division
Basantar R.
Nagwal
11 Baluch
Darman
Gamrolla
47 Inf Bde
Degh Nadi
XXX
Rupo Chak
11 Bde
21 Baluch
R & S Coy
Jarpal
40
Punjab
Zafarwal
Bara Pind
24 Punjab
Laiser Kalan
Rambri
Chakra
24 Brigade
Barwal
PAKISTAN
Changez
Force
Dhamtal
XXX
0 1 5 km
Minefields

A map of the 47th Brigade's attack on Jarpal, and major Pakistani defence positions. (Map by Micky Hewitt)

losses, 13th Lancers and 31st Cavalry cut its tank strength by more than half (apart from tanks destroyed, there were also damaged tanks). Only two regiments against two very fine Indian regiments with excellent gunnery skills and near flawless tactical handling, was not a recipe for success.

The Battle of Chakra: the View from Pakistan's Side

This battle is important because India turned the northern flank of the Pakistan defence and cleared the way for subsequent operations, It is a fascinating case where the Pakistani historian Major A. H. Amin bitterly crticises Pakistan 13th Punjab Regiment for failing to defend Chakra across the Karar Nadi; whereas the Indians say the Pakistanis performed better. Karar was the lynchpin of Pakistani defences in the Zafarwal sector. Chakri, behind the river, was held by a company of 13th Punjab and two troops (six tanks) of 33rd Cavalry. Major Amin wrote:

> It was a formidable position and could have held out longer. More so because a number of tanks of (the Indian tank squadron) did not actually get across the Karar. (Chakra) was DISGRACEFULLY abandoned and no action taken against this Punjab regiment-commander, or any of his company commanders. The fighting or no fighting this battalion did may be gauged from fact that they suffered four peanut fatal casualties in whole of 1971 War. Basically protected (from reprimand) because Major-General Abdul Ali Malik was from this unit.

Indian officers, Bobby Grewal and Janakrj Vatsu who participated in the fighting, provide a different perspective:

> Our tanks got bogged down in Karir Nadi due to slush but their roaring noise during pitch dark night did contribute to miscalculation by the opposing armour. Equally, the Punjab company supported by Recce & Support elements did give a solid stand including a counter-attack in early hours.’[20]

Another knocked out M48A1 of the 31st Lancers. Clearly visible at the bottom of the turret, next to the gun mantlet, is a hole caused by an anti-tank shell hit. (Albert Grandolini collection)

Lieutenant Colonel Karki from the 17th Horse, with two of the captured M48A1s of the 31st Lancers, collected outside Bara Pind. (Albert Grandolini collection)

47th Brigade at Barapind – Jarpal[21]

Major Babar Ghias Uddin was a direct participant in the battle and as such, witnessed the attack of the 47th Brigade on Barapind – Jarpal. According to him, Indian troops fought significantly better than the Indians themselves have claimed:

> Indian 47th Brigade highly successful attack, reorganised and build-up by attacking battalions, i.e. 16th Madras, 6th Madras, and 3rd Grenadiers from north to south, plus efficient build-up by 17th Poona Horse right in the middle of cold dark night (so as to be ready to attack the well dug up defences of our 24th Punjab in Barapind & Jarpal and Coy of the 21st Baloch in Sarajchak), I think merit appreciation.
>
> 47th Brigade started on night 15/16 Dec after last light capturing Sarajchak by 16th Madras. Immediately then 3rd Grenadiers captured Jarpal. 16th Madras fanned out towards their right in village Ghazipur and Lalial Reserve Forest, leaving space for 6th Madras to come and occupy Sarajchak. The story is not yet over. It was all happening with clockwise precision this infantry tank operation something on lines of blitzkrieg. I tell you how very next moment after infantry battalions successful actions, 17th Poona Horse was pumped in very efficiently and in a highly professional manner.
>
> 47th Brigade was deployed as follows: a tank squadron with 16th Madras in Ghazipur & Lalial RF on right, a tank squadron minus with 3rrd Grenadiers in Jarpal and a squadron plus Regimental HQ in Sarajchak with 6th Madras as reserve. This action which I am narrating was completed by 47th Brigade by 0100 midnight 16/17 Dec. These few hours [of] highly efficient actions of 47th Brigade earned them a great staying power. This in nutshell was the root cause of great success of the brigade against our four counter attacks:
>
> Initially by two rifle companies on Sarajchak & Lalial on 15/16 Dec at 0100
>
> Then a counter-attack by a rifle company and squadron (minus) on Barapind on the morning of 16 December.
>
> Then the fiasco of the destruction of 8th Armoured Brigade throughout the day on 16 December.
>
> Finally, a counter-attack by 35th FF on Jarpal on first light 17 Dec against 3rd Grenadiers.

The dialogue, discussion and debate could continue about whether it was poor professional understanding of senior commanders (including that of the 24th Brigade and the 8th Armoured Brigade), or a mental breakdown of division and corps commanders, however, the fact remains that it was the highly trained, motivated, professional Indian battalion commands, with their brave troops, 17th Poona Horse CO, his squadron commanders and men, along with a highly professional, competent, bold and brave brigade and division commander (and division commander General Pinto), who meticulously planned and determinedly carried out, conducted and executed their bridgehead operation across Basantar with great success. It is the author's belief that 47th Brigade is rightly justified to celebrate Basantar Day every year.

In comparison, during the Shakargarh Battles, the 4th Grenadiers and 3/9th Gurkhas tried hard to capture Shakargarh salient during the nights from 13 to 14 December and again from 14 to 15 December, but never succeeded. Their battalion, brigade and divisional commanders failed to resort to efficient reorganisation and speedy build-up, despite the fact that their frontline companies and commands (Major S. S. Chaudhary of the 4th Grenadiers and Major Survey and Lieutenant Smiton of 3/9th Gurkhas) were successful in achieving their objectives in Phase 1. As a consequence, despite deploying a reinforced division, Indians failed because they did not bring in fresh troops fast enough to reinforce the initial success. Instead, all the above-mentioned officers were injured and became prisoners of war, together with 70 other ranks.

Brigadier G. D. Bakshi, Indian Army, concluded:

> Vulnerability of armoured forces is an illusion. We did launch a limited offensive in the Shakargarh Bulge. Our 1965 War experience had led us to lay more emphasis on independent armoured brigades as offensive instruments in 1971. Once again, the rates of advance were slow and our operations seemed to be dogged with rigidity, over caution and an obsessive concern for the security of our flanks. An armoured warfare enthusiast had once correctly remarked, 'The vulnerability of the flanks of the tank thrust is an optical illusion. Its safety lies in its speed and constant movement'.[22]

8

CONCLUSION

The analysis above brings into focus what might have been Pakistan's worst weakness – a lack of higher leadership. These variables are not quantifiable, but as a generalisation, good leadership can overcome deficiencies in numbers and equipment, but bad leadership can lead to disaster. Khan explicitly recognises this critical factor in the title of his book: 'Pakistan's Leadership in Crisis'. It is true Pakistan was short of resources but had it employed 6th Armoured and 17th Division aggressively, the immediate outcome could have been more in Pakistan's favour. Instead, having no way of knowing it was to be a short war, Pakistan conserved forces for a long war that never happened. At the same time, waiting passively in its I Corps sector was not the best option.

Field Marshal Khan made it clear that GHQ provided no leadership to Eastern Command (East Pakistan) and limited leadership to the Western theatre. From the start, Yahya Khan wanted costs to avoid war with India at all because he understood – as would any higher leader – that war was a losing option but the author feels this is no excuse to avoid doing the best he could. When war came on 20 November 1971, Yahya was mentally unprepared and seems to have suffered a morale collapse.

Indian leadership in the East Pakistan campaign was excellent and achieved war winning results. In the west in Kashmir and Jammu, Indian leadership was crippled from the start by the last minute changes imposed by the politicians in Delhi, namely that India could not attack first and the accompanying order not to lose any ground. By cancelling its Kashmir and Jammu offensives, India surrendered the initiative to Pakistan, and the 'not one inch' order violated common sense.

While Pakistan military leadership was mediocre, leading to many missed opportunities, GHQ was on the defensive intending to preserve its strike forces for the real battle which never came. The Indian political leadership massively failed with just a third of the larger strategic objectives achieved. The achievement was the eastern campaign; Jammu and Kashmir was a stalemate. For the rest of the western front, the political leadership decided to return gains to Pakistan. The rationalisation was a 'just peace' that would lead to stability which it obviously, did not. Despite being critical of Pakistan's military leadership, Pakistan survived because its centre of gravity was in the west, not the east.

Indian military leadership in the west was wanting but had the war continued, as was India's plan, it would have overcome earlier mistakes. This was not to be.

APPENDIX I

Tanks

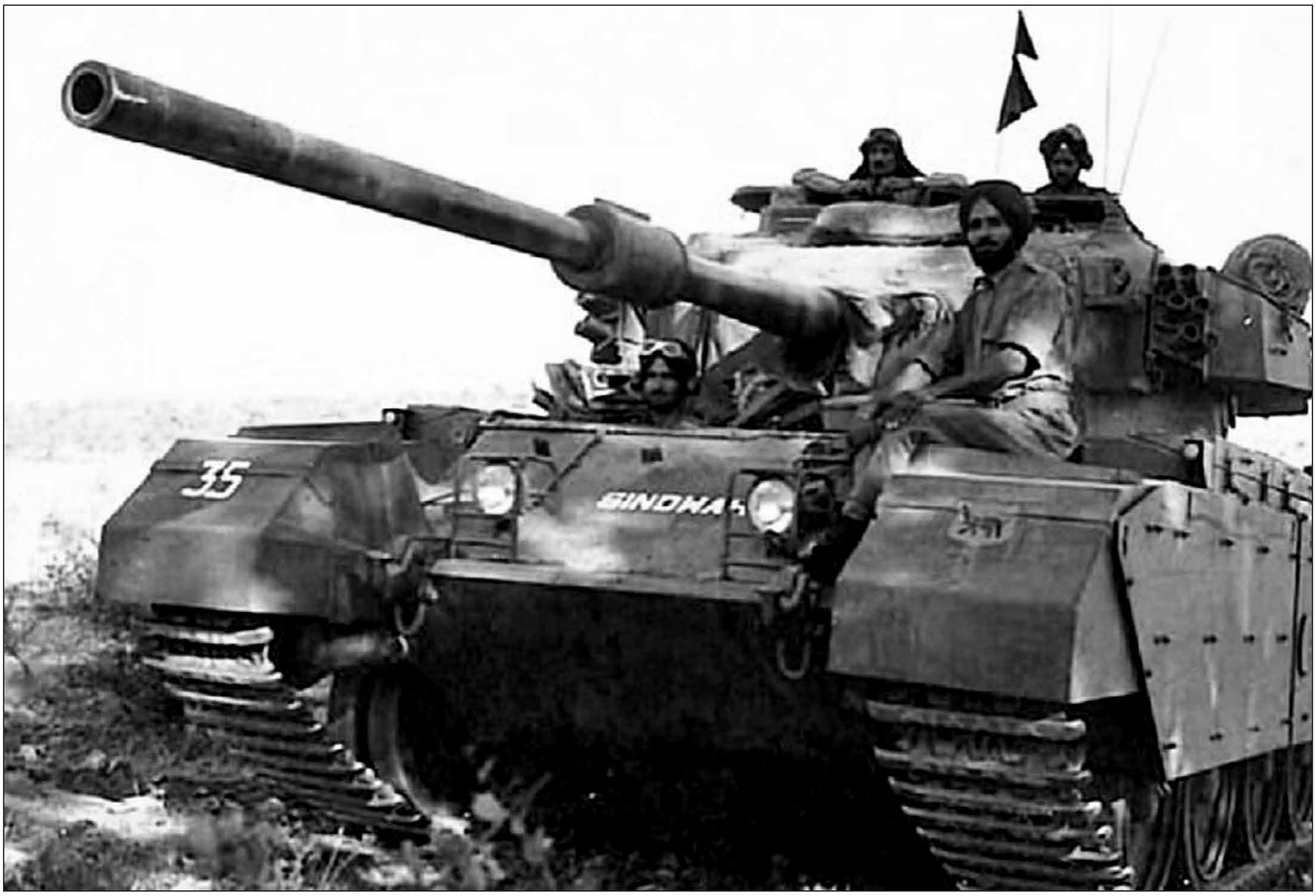
When studying individual battles in the Shakargarh sector, one should keep in mind that both sides considered the Pakistani-operated M47s as no match for Indian T-54/55 (generally, both considered the T-55 as the 'night-combat-capable version of the T-54). Table 23 shows a brief comparison.[1]

Centurion and T-54/55/Type-59

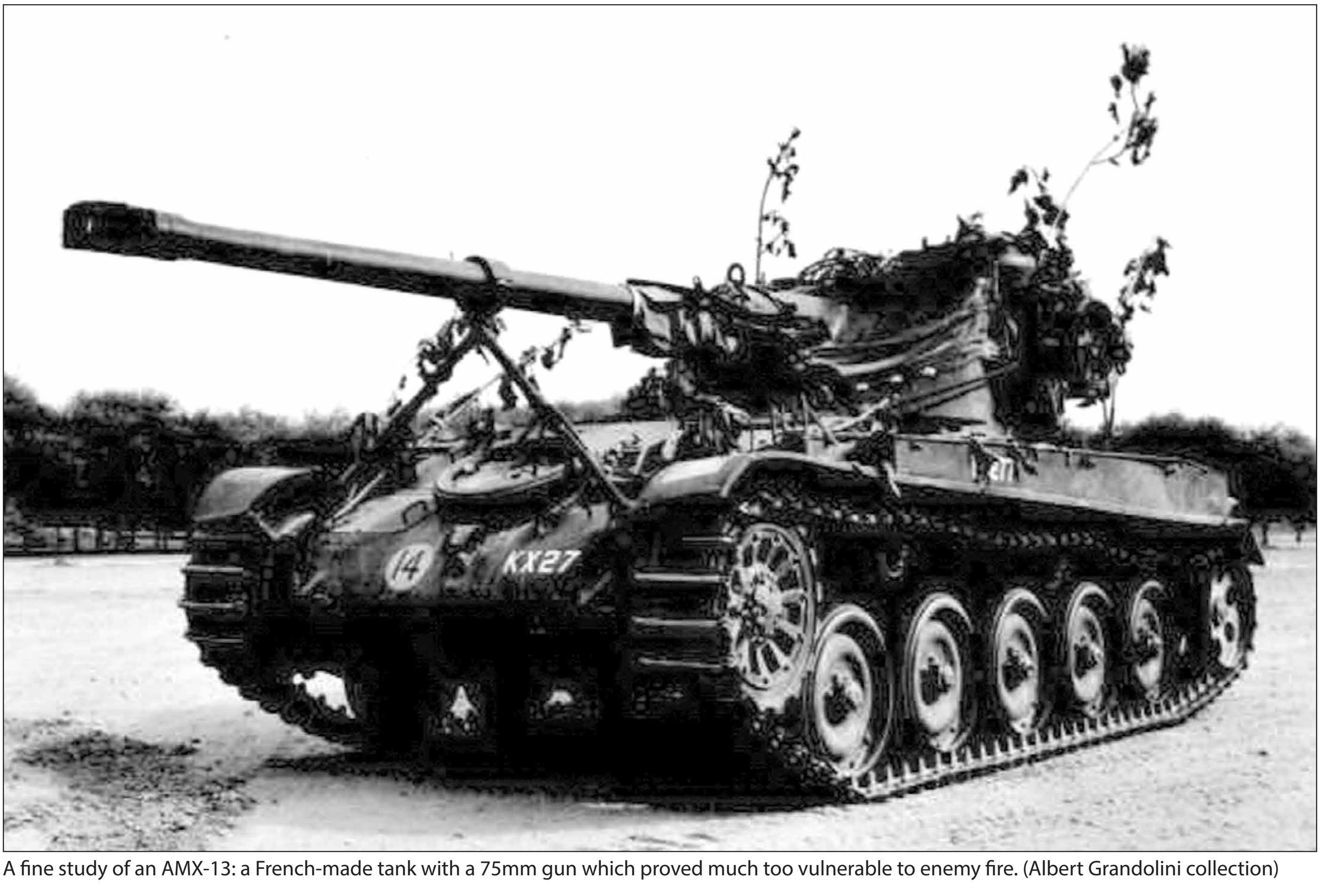
India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru was a pacifist and wanted to spend India's money on development rather than arms.

Table 23: Comparison between T-54/Type-59 and M47 Main Battle Tanks

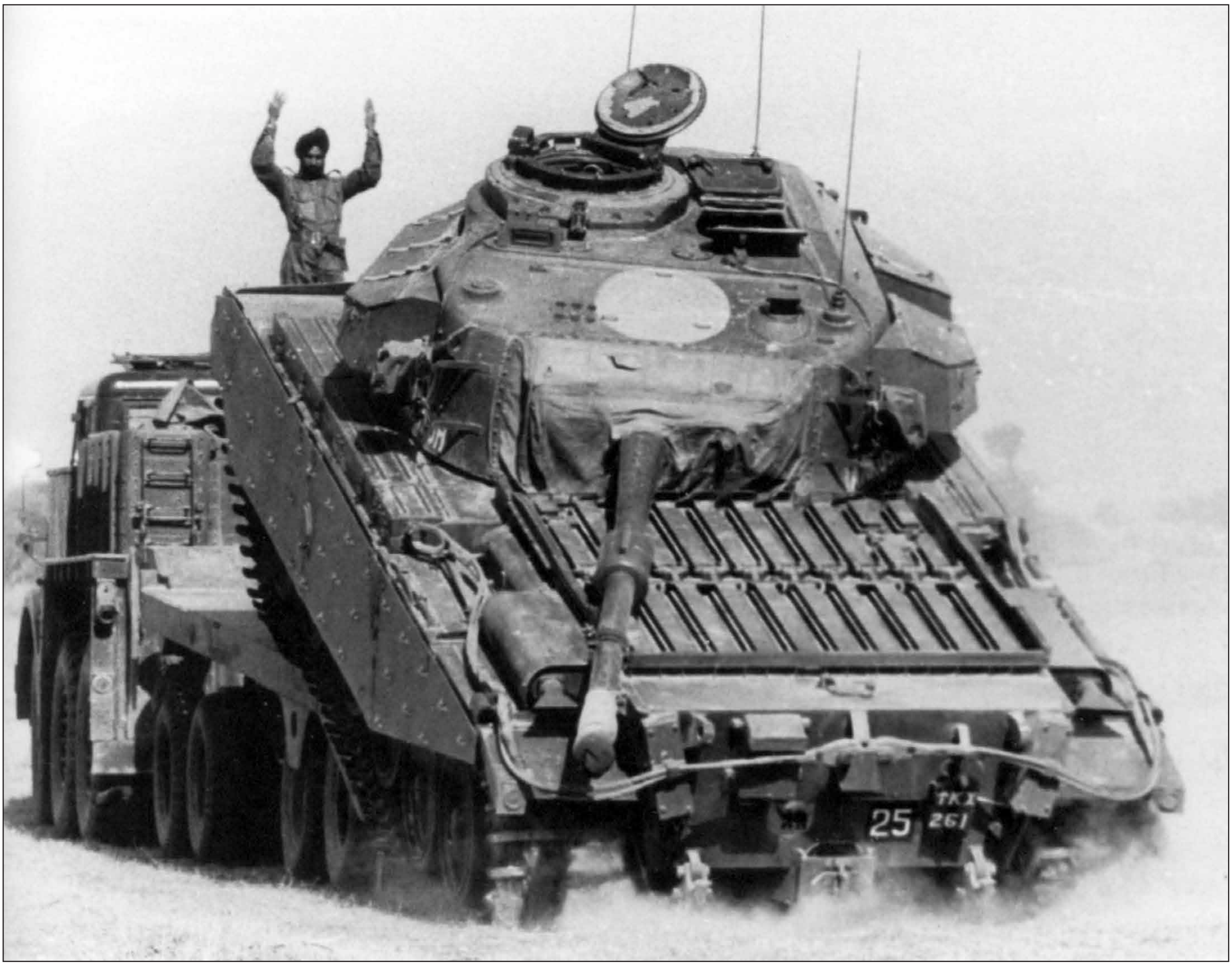
T-54	M47
Sstarted arriving 1966	Obsolete in US Army when given to Pakistan starting 1956
Lower power to weight ratio, but delivered more power to tracks	
Diesel engine, higher torque, lower ground pressure, allowing better traverse through mud	
More powerful gun – 100mm	90mm gun
Rolled homogenous armour (advantage)	Cast armour (not as good)
Sight 3.5x and 7x	Sight 6x; stereoscopic; much better optics; commander can override the gunner if seeing a more immediate threat; definite advantage
Magazine capacity: 43 rounds	Up to 70 rounds
Cramped turret, limited to a rate of fire of five rounds per minute	Nearly double rate of fire
Gun depression -5 degrees	Gun depression -10 degrees, advantage in hill terrain
Range likely 300+km	Shorter range, only 160km



A front view of Centurion Mk 7 assigned to one of regiments of the 1st Armoured Division, Indian Army. (Albert Grandolini collection)



A fine study of an AMX-13: a French-made tank with a 75mm gun which proved much too vulnerable to enemy fire. (Albert Grandolini collection)



A view of a Centurion Mk 7 of the Indian Army, as seen while being loaded onto a tilt-trailer, with its turret turned almost fully to the rear (as usual during the transport), in 1966. Notable is the original 20-pdr gun and below it, the deck of the Meteor engine. (Albert Grandolini collection)

When Pakistan received a first batch of M47 from the US under CENTO, Nehru refused parity and brought only 200 Centurions, enough for four regiments, plus 20 tanks as attrition reserve. The Centurion was the world's first main battle tank, entering service immediately after the end of the Second World War. Over 4,400 were manufactured which was remarkable as in those days, the British could not market and their army was massively downsized. The Centurion was sensibly designed and loved by its Indian armour crews because it was simple to maintain, easy to operate and highly reliable. Nonetheless, while the tank itself was one of the best of its era, the Mark 7 version operated by the Indian Army was a basic, unimproved model. Pakistani Pattons had better armour and their guns had better armour-penetration-values. While there is an argument to be made that the Centurion fielded by India was one of the best tanks at the time, India's Centurions lacked important upgrades and were fielded next to outdated M4 Shermans and flimsy AMX-13s. Pakistan, meanwhile, had Patton tanks.

The Chinese Type-59 was a clone of the Soviet T-54A. Additionally, it was made in the 1960s, when Chinese manufacturing was unsophisticated. It is easy to regard it as an early 1950s low quality main battle tank. First, it must be remembered that its adversaries were also unsophisticated by western standards, Second, it had the following improvements:

- vertical gun stabiliser
- improved telescopic sight
- driver's infrared headlight
- multistage air filter
- radiator controls
- electrical oil pump
- automatic fire extinguishers
- extra fuel tanks
- robust Christie suspension
- 280km cruiser range (the Pattons were bedevilled with short range)
- turret ballistic design of the turret with better armour protection
- low silhouette
- 100mm armour vs 90mm gun of the M47.[2]

Pakistan received about 700 Type-59s between 1966 and 1970 and they were the mainstay of its armoured Corps in the 1971 War. Therefore, Pakistan had parity with India in the number of tank regiments, although probably not in attrition reserves.

A quartet of Pakistan Army's M48 as seen during a military parade in the 1980s. (Albert Grandolini collection)

Table 24: Pakistan Tank Regiments by Type[3]

Number of Regiments	Type
10	Type-59
6	M47/M48
6	M4 Sherman
1	T-34/85
1	T-55
1	M24

Due to operating a larger number of T-54/55s, the Indian Army had a technological advantage. In those days, Indian cavalry regiments were considered better trained than the Pakistani. Interestingly, the Indians gave the Pakistanis an advantage in attacking infantry although the Pakistani habit of mounting desperate brave charges with heavy casualties, was unproductive. Pakistan infantry exhausted itself in the first days of the war by reckless over-exertion.

In the defence, most Indian infantry regiments were stauncher but these are generalisations. As seen in Volume I, the East Pakistan campaign, the Pakistanis were often tough defenders, in part because they were fighting over their own territory and had spent months skilfully preparing their defences. The problem was that in many cases, the senior commanders lost heart when being outnumbered.

APPENDIX II

Lineages of Valour

Alam Brothers

Six Alam brothers served in all three services on eastern and western fronts. Shamim Alam (28 Cavalry) and Firoz Alam (33 FF) served in Chhamb Sector, Zahir Alam (38 Cavalry) in western desert sector and Ijaz Alam (13 Lancers) was killed in action in the battle of Barapind. Mushtaq Alam served with Pakistan Air Force and Shimon Alam with Pakistan navy.

Azim Brothers

Five Azim brothers from different branches of the army were honouring the uniform in 1971. Ijaz (Guides Cavalry & 11 Cavalry), Riaz (Baloch), Imtiaz (Engineers), Niaz (Artillery) and Aitzaz were defending different walls of the citadel.

Dogar Family

One Dogar family sent all male members of the family that included the father and six sons to defend the land and sea borders of the country on eastern and western fronts. Major Mahboob Ali Dogar (6/12 Frontier Forces Rifles & Army Education Corps) was retired but recalled by army headquarters when war started. His two sons served in East Pakistan. Captain (later Brigadier) Yasub Ali Dogar (Guides Infantry and SSG) was with SSG and Captain (later Lieutenant Colonel) Shoaib Ali Dogar (Engineers) was in Mymensingh. Both brothers became prisoners of war. Lieutenant (later Vice Admiral & Vice Chief of Naval Staff) Mahmood Ali Dogar and Cadet (later Vice Admiral & Chief of Staff) Tayyab Ali Dogar served with the Pakistan navy. Yusuf Ali Dogar served with Pakistan International Airlines and the Ministry of Defence requisitioned his services for the defence of Gwadar. Ayub Ali Dogar served with a Mujahid battalion.

Six brothers from a military family of Potohar region, with several generations having a history of military service, answered the call of duty. Their uncle, Subedar Muhammad Yusuf, was retired but recalled and he served with East Pakistan Rifles where he was killed in action when Bengali troops mutinied. Their cousin Lieutenant (Brigadier) Shafiq ur Rahman (15 Punjab & Aviation) served in the western theatre. This is the story of this family.

Khans of Pakistan

Lance Naik Alam Khan OBI (2 Punjab Regiment) served with the British Indian Army. His two sons, Sawar Noor Khan (7 Cavalry) and Risaldar Firoz Khan (7 Cavalry & 20 Lancers), proudly served with the Indian cavalry. In 1971, Noor Khan's six sons defended Pakistan's borders in both wings. Lieutenant Colonel (later Brigadier) Amir Muhammad Khan (3 Punjab, 34 Punjab & SSG) commanded a battalion in East Pakistan, Major (Colonel) Surkhuru Khan (27 Punjab & 33 Punjab) was in Mymensingh theatre and recently commissioned Second Lieutenant (Lieutenant Colonel) Muhamad Imtiaz (31 Punjab), with barely two weeks of service, was deployed in Sylhet area.

Captain (Brigadier) Ghulam Abbas Khan (27 Punjab, 45 Punjab and 54 Punjab; now 18 Sindh) transferred to 54 Punjab a few days before the war and joined a unit marked for deployment in East Pakistan. His commanding officer told him that as his three brothers were already serving in East Pakistan therefore, he was going to ask GHQ to post him out of battalion to a unit in West Pakistan. Abbas refused to be posted out replying, 'Sir I have joined the army to fight and will remain with the battalion as major fighting is in East Pakistan'. During this time, the air and sea route to the eastern wing was cut off and 53 Punjab was diverted to Shakargarh area on the western front. Abbas won the gallantry award of Tamgha-e-Basalat and two COAS commendation cards. Captain (Major) Alam Khan (38 Punjab and SSG) was part of the SSG team deployed in western desert area in support of 18 Division attack. In 1974, he was killed in action during Baluchistan insurgency. His sixth brother, Warrant Officer Amir Abdullah Khan, served with Pakistan Air Force in West Pakistan.

APPENDIX III

The Sad Fate of the 35th Battalion, FFR, Pakistan Army

In possibly the most futile action on either side in the 1971, 35 Frontier Force (wrongly given as 39 Frontier Force in Indian accounts) was destroyed in a charge against Indian 3 Grenadiers at Jarpal. The unit sacrificed its lives due to the failures in command and staff planning at all levels. This is evident from the unit's short history. It was officially established on 19 April 1971, under Lieutenant Colonel Akram Raja. On 29 September, it was ordered to move from Chaman, Baluchistan, to the desert in Sindh. On 4 December, it marched to Fort Abbas and then to Sialkot sector on 14 December. In the evening of 16 December it went to Pindi Purbian with the order to counter-attack on the following morning in the Jarpal area. The unit kept shuttling between three different brigade areas, with no clear orders. The commanding officer was denied any reconnaissance of the objective in daylight. This can be seen as an example of leadership failure, poor staff planning at GHQ and command failure at corps/division and brigade level. Was this attack really needed after (the Dacca) surrender on 16 December and a ceasefire between Pakistan and India in the afternoon of 17 December?

The attack was supposed to take place with artillery and armour support. When the time came, the fire support was available, but not the armour and the 35th FF had to charge in the open, totally exposed to the Indian guns that cut it down. Nevertheless, so fierce was the attack, the last man was killed just 50 metres from the leading Indian tanks. Casualty figures vary, but some Indian estimates of 200 were wrong, unless India counts the wounded. The CO, three officers, a junior commissioned office, and 56 enlisted, died, for a total of 61 KIA and 75 WIA, plus some missing, for perhaps 160 casualties.

Why did this happen? At that time, a recount states that Lieutenant Colonel Akram protested the lack of fire support and the opportunity to conduct reconnaissance, but 124th brigade commander taunted him and accused hm of cowardice so he attacked, leading to a certain death. Major A. H. Amin was very bitter about the episode. He said that with the formal ceasefire just a few hours away, certain commanders wanted medals: however, it is an axiom of the military that if you send your men to die for your medal, you lead the charge.

The Indian battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel Airy of the 3rd Grenadiers, was so impressed by Akram's bravery, he wrote out a citation himself. However, Akram received only a Hilal-i-Jurat (posthumously) – the second highest award. Without question, he deserved the highest, a Nishan-i-Haider. Major Amin says, however, the 35th Battalion, Frontier Force Regiment, was a new battalion without the clan connections of older units. If so, the leadership of the Pakistan Army disgraced itself.

Indeed, Major-General Nuk Babar, later expressed the following critique of the HQ I Corps Pakistan Army:

> I will only comment about the I Corps area which I saw as a direct participant. The corps commander, Lieutenant General Irshaad, had no operational talent and should not have been promoted after all that he had not done in the 1965 War. He lost his nerve on the first day of the war. General Irshad informed GHQ that he could not guarantee the holding of Sialkot so 17th Division plus two remaining brigades of the division were deployed to the Ravi-Marsala Link Canal. This left 23rd Division with only one brigade of 17th Division, instead of a full division. These additional reinforcements from 17th Division saw no action and were wasted.
>
> GOC I corps unnecessarily exaggerated Indian strength (we have seen only a few brigades of Indian Corps were involved in the offensive because GOC Indian I Corp Like Pakistan GOC I Corps, kept stripping away brigades to meet the imaginary offensive of the Pakistanis.)
>
> Corps Artillery was kept at a distance of 10 miles (this was to support 23rd Division, which would have 17 and 23rd Division and I Corps artillery brigades) and General Irshad with not allow

Brigadier I Corps Artillery Brigade to even enter the operations room. Thus, there was no coordination of artillery. Making a I Corps counter-offensive against Indian I Corps attack impossible. There also was no coordination of I Corps artillery with 8th Division, leading to the Bara Pind fiasco (as outsiders, we can in fairness ask if Barapind was solely the result of lack of artillery coordination).

However, the behaviour of GOC Indian I Corps matches this level of failure, although he did engage the enemy. Indian I Corps was an intelligent staff officer. But in the end, he destroyed his own offensive due to excessive fears about a nonexistent Pakistani offensive, as did GOC Pakistan I Corps, before serious battle was joined. Both GOCs seem to have an insufficient understanding of the operational level and ended up acting like two failed battalion commanders. It must not be forgotten that the GOC Indian 12th Division, like General Irshad, simply disregarded his orders and ruined the Indian Sindh offensive and this is to be covered in Volume 3. However, what does this say about the respective army HQs that the commanders could not get their senior officers to follow orders? For Pakistan, the civilian court of inquiry at least, asked for a courts martial. Indians, making complete fools of themselves, elevated their I Corps to the highest level of bravery and success.

APPENDIX IV

Pakistan's 6th Armoured Division

Defecting Bengali troops destroyed the secrecy of Pakistani operations. Even the commander of the 6th Armoured Division as of 1971, was a Bengali. Unsurprisingly, the division did not enter combat. However, there were additional reasons for 6th Armoured Division's lack of activity. This puzzle is a good example of how military history research, at least, should proceed.

6 Armoured and 17 Infantry Divisions formed Strategic Reserve north under I Corps. It was the second corps raised after the first, IV Corps. Although Pakistan did raise II Corps and planned an abortive III Corps. I Corps inactivity is a puzzle, because the Indian I Corps attack (36, 39, and 54 Divisions; X Sector; 2 and 16 Independent Armoured Brigades), posed a grave threat not just to Sialkot, but the entire salient east of the line Sialkot-Lahore. Fortunately for Pakistan, the Indian offensive was incompetently handled however, that is more reason to ask why the two divisions stood by.

Had they joined Pakistan 23rd Division's attack on Chhamb, it is likely Indian 10th Division, guarding the vital line of communication between Akhnoor (with 26 Division in Jammu to its left and the 25th Division in Mendhar to its right) would have been knocked back, with several negative consequences for India, yet 6 Armoured and 17 Infantry Divisions did not move. Was this a plot? Was the concern the GOC 6 was a Bengali? On examination the answer appears nothing more than a variation of Hanlon's Razor, restated as, 'Never attribute to malice what can be explained by stupidity'. Reasons identified why 6 Armoured Division might not have entered combat:

a) The loyalty issue was an insufficient cause because GHQ could simply have replaced the GOC.

b) An armoured division in the attack should be paired with an infantry division (nowadays a mechanised division). 17th Division was paired with 6th Armoured, but it was split up, with one brigade (66) sent to 23rd Division and another (88) sent to IV Corps. That left only 77 Brigade. It could be argued that as 23rd Division was overstrength in infantry, so 6 Division with 17th Division's remaining brigade could have sufficed to participate in a counter-offensive. This is valid since 23rd Division had five infantry brigades plus an independent armoured brigade versus the standard three.

c) GHQ wanted to enmesh Indian I Corps in Pakistani defences and cause attrition before counter-attacking. This turns out to be correct.

d) 8 Independent Armoured Brigade was supposed to use the mesh created by three minefields to trap Indian 54 Division's offensive, impose a 72-hour delay, and set the stage for a counter-offensive by 6 Armoured Division – which never came. Another mystery is that 8th Independent Armoured Brigade managed to hold out for 288-hours (14-days versus the planned three), and yet 6 Division did not move.

e) Further research shows the problem had nothing to do with GOC 6 Armoured Division, but his corps commander, GOC I Corps, who turned out to have no interest in fighting. Despite war plans ordering him to give 17th Division to 23rd Division, he insisted that he could not defend Sialkot from an Indian attack if his strike reserve was shifted to Chhamb. However, the offensive was cancelled at the start of the war.

I Corps had four divisions with two completely different missions. Two (8 and 15) defended the Ravi-Chenab corridor and 6th Armoured and 17th Divisions were the northern strategic reserve. Pakistan was very constrained for resources, but eventually in or around 1986–88, it finally did the logical thing: split I Corps into two, with XXX Corps taking the defence of the border and I becoming a strike corps.

With respect to corps HQs, Pakistan was better off than in 1965, when it tried to operate with just HQ I Corps. In the period between the two wars, it raised HQ IV Corps at Lahore and II Corps at Multan to control the southern strike force (1 Armoured, 7 and 33 Infantry Divisions). However, the 11 brigades in Kashmir under 12 and 23rd Divisions, had no corps HQ and were under direct control of GHQ. Further, to ensure the success of 23rd Division's attack between Chhamb and Surankote, 17th Division was to come under command of 23rd Division, until needed for the northern strike force to enter action. GOC I Corps, in direct defiance of the war plan, refused to give up control of 17th Division, particularly its vital artillery. GHQ, itself in a thoroughly demoralised state, was unable to bring GOC I Corps to heel. So, the precious strike reserve was underutilised (this is a conditional statement subject to revision if more information becomes available). Amin makes the point that while a reserve must always be maintained, Clausewitz said that not using the reserve was wasting it.

The irony of this is that an identical situation pertained on the Indian side. GOC 26 Division wanted to drive on Sialkot but was prevented by his corps commander under the Chief's orders not to avoid losing territory to Pakistan in an offensive by 6th Armoured and 17 Infantry Divisions. Without 26 Division, Indian I Corps had no chance of emerging successfully from its messed-up offensive. In the 1965 War, the same division had an identical mission, to push south on the line Jammu-Sialkot while I Corps pushed west. The division's GOC advanced far enough to see the high-rise buildings of the city. Satisfied, he refused to advance further.

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Lastly, conclusive proof that GOC 6 Division’s loyalty was never in question. On the ceasefire, his staff and cavalry commanders staged a coup against him, as also happened with 17th Division. The mutineers demanded Yahya Khan resign. This perhaps may have been the final straw leading Yahya to step down, but GOC 6 Division talked his rebels into backing away, thus staying loyal to the regime to the last.[1] In any case, President Yahya Khan resigned on 20 December, making a direct coup unnecessary.

NOTES

Author’s notes

1 Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema, Pakistan’s Defence Policy 1947–58 (New York, StoMatrin Press, 1990) & Suzanne Shwartz, ‘Union Budget of India 1947-1948: Minister of Finance’s Speech’ (Paragraph 20), theteamwork.com, 12 August 2018.

2 The following are important sources of reference on the fighting in Jammu and Kashmir: John Gill, ‘Atlas’; Official Indian History; Major-General Sukhwant Singh; Major-General F.M. Khan; Major-General Gurcharn Singh and Lieutenant-Colonel K. C. Praval.

Introduction

1 Lone, ‘British Relations with the Princely State of Jammu and Kashmir’, pp.348–357.

2 Naik, ‘Landlords, Peasants and the Dogra Rule in Kashmir’, pp.782–793.

3 Abid Ahmad Shah, ‘The Menace of Corruption in Kashmir’, Eurasiareview.com, 14 June 2018.

4 See the memoirs of Patel’s assistant, V.P. Menon for details. The story of the integration of the Indian States (1956). Orient Longmans. Chapter XX Kashmir p. 324-345.

5 I would like to express my gratitude to Major A.H. Amin for educating me on this, a fact that changed my perspective on the first Kashmir War.

6 Parveen Sahweny, 'Claims on POK make India more vulnerable', *Force Magazine*, YouTube.com, December 2022.

7 America has a singular advantage in that it is constantly at war or preparing for war. This permits the achievement of high competency.

8 Krishnan, N., *No Way But Surrender: An Account of the Indo-Pakistan War in the Bay of Bengal,* (New Delhi: Vikas Book, 1980).

9 Sodhi, H. S. (1993). *Top Brass: A Critical Appraisal of the Indian Military Leadership*. India: Trishul Publications.

10 This expression first appeared in a British newspaper of the 1960s and referred to an Indian loss in a hockey game which they were easily winning.

11 I always found India's fake righteous insistence that it didn't start the 1971 War a grating, unnecessary hypocrisy. Why not take credit for what was, for once, an Indian proactive action?

12 Colonel Dr Anil Athale, 'Three Indian Blunders in the 1971 War', RediffNews.com, 12 December 2011

13 'The Fallen: Military Strength and Deaths in Combat', UK Parliament, retrieved in November 2022.

Chapter 1

1 Mandeep Singh Bajwa does not agree with the raising date of 23 Division, but I received the information from a person intimately connected with the division.

2 Major Nasir Uddin (2015). *Juddhe Juddhe Shadinata.* Dhaka: Agamee Prokashoni Publishers.

3 I have yet to one day study this – if Pakistan provides access to its diplomatic and military archives. So, I cannot "prove" the point. Yet simple logic says Pakistan was either not thinking or thinking wishfully.

4 In my opinion, this was partly because Pakistan was organised for very short wars, after which the US – and by 1971, the Chinese – were expected to save the country.

5 I don't know enough to say if the American instruction 1956 to 1965 was adapted to a low literacy and low technology level force.

Chapter 2

1 I urge partisan readers to stay calm here: I am describing the situation as is, not as India and Pakistan – and China – want it to be!

Chapter 3

1 We hope that someone a better knowledge will enlighten us about this unusual operation where a handful of men captured 800 square kilometres of high mountain terrain in the dead of winter.

2 'The Saviour of Ladakh', ikashmir.net, 3 July 2023 & 'Maj Kushal Chand: Ladakh Valley's Saviour', *Tribune India*, 10 August 2019. On a personal note, at age 27 I strolled up a Kashmir mountain of 4,000 metres in 4-hours, starting from 2,800 metres. The soldiers stationed there thought this was impressive for a civilian. They themselves routinely climbed the height in 2½ hours, sometimes twice a day. Now at age 76 I hobble with a stick and congratulate myself if I make 50-metres level metres at 400-feet altitude.

3 Singh, S. *India's War Since Independence* (New Delhi: Lancer, 2009).

4 Indian Official History p.304.

5 Praval, K.C., Indian Army After Independence, (New Delhi, Lancers, 1993).

6 A *corvee* is a traditional feudal obligation to provide a day of free labour.

7 Why could India not pay porters in this poor region a worthwhile salary to obviate the need for a *corvee*? Well, you would have better luck getting money out of a rock than out of the finance people. Could the Army not have made a case that for 10-million rupees, potential gains of thousands of square kilometres could be obtained? It is unlikely the finance folks would understand. Their primary task was keeping spending within budget, not the battlefield. It is possible the Ministry would have listened had the Army made its case forcibly enough but asking the Army to think in such 'innovative' terms is futile. The services were beaten down by the politicians and bureaucrats to become passive recipients of the civilian's grudgingly thin, largesse. Even in 1971, the Indian defence budget was less than three percent compared to less than two percent in the disastrous year of 1962. Given that every kilometre of land frontier along 7500km was hostile or, as in the case of Nepal, defenceless against a Chinese attack en route to the Indian plain, four percent of GDP on defence was required. The bureaucrats and politicians justified their parsimony by telling the military it was demanding money needed for development of the poverty-stricken country. The military had no answer. In the event, India received limited development due to corruption at all levels and an inadequate defence. I am not arguing for more troops: India had enough but was very short on equipment. For example, the problem of protecting the Cease Fire Line was easily resolved by inducting 60 Mi-8s by end 1970, allowing the shifting of troops as needed, rather than locking them into static positions.

8 See Asia@War, Kargil 1999

9 Those historically minded can refer to the First World War campaign in the Italian Alps, at heights lower than the Himalayas. The war lasted three years and five months and the Italian and Austrian casualties were horrendous. There was no shortage of troops; both sides had about 60 divisions each for a front of 650 kilometres, or one division per 11 kilometres, 30 times denser than the Indian 19th Division could achieve. There was no shortage of casualties either; over 2 million for each side. For all these reasons, I am reluctant to criticise either side for their actions or lack of actions. Given the war was just two weeks long, there was no time to seize an enemy position, consolidate and build-up for the next push although there is ample reason to criticise India's lack of strategy.

10 A gali (or gully) is a ravine that carries away excess water during the wet season.

11 Major K. C. Praval, '1971 Operations – Case West, II', Indiandefencereview.com, 15 March 2011. Available at: http://www.indiandefencereview.com/spotlights/1971-operations-case-west-ii/

12 Major-General Sukhwant Singh, '1971: Defence of Kashmir Valley', Indian Defence Review, 6 April 2018

13 Prasad, Official History, pp.310–312.

14 Based on Major-General Jogindar Singh, 'Operations of 1971 War', Indiandefencereview.com, 4 December 2020

15 I am not commenting on the Pakistan COAS and his generals, because we have seen multiple times the extent of their incompetence.

16 It seems the historians have here thoughtfully drawn a curtain across events. Rather than assume the worst, that this brigade miserably failed despite its double strength, I would suggest another alternative. Sukhwant Singh says Pakistan had its 80th Infantry Brigade north of the Jhelum River. If so, it is more sensible to assume that the rest of 161st Brigade was deployed defensively in case Pakistan's 80th attacked.

17 Notably, in 1965, the 19th and 25th Divisions of the Indian Army had a total of 42 infantry battalions between them. The reason was that Pakistan began the war as an 'insurgency in Kashmir'. Thus, multiple battalions were rushed to the scene to bolster available units but also add to the rear-area security.

18 A difficulty in writing on modern India's wars is that no writer provides decent maps. John Gill is an exception, but he is too laconic in his effort to avoid clutter. Take, for example, the Punch map: it is easily read, and the map contours are nicely coloured. Moreover, Gill provides Indian deployments south of the Punch River. But on the Pakistan side, only the proposed thrust line of IX Corps is noted. For the other attacking battalions, we must go to the official history, which shows only battalions north of the Punch River. General K. P. Candeth, GOC Western Command, was in a good position to give us a comprehensive map. Yet the print is so small it is difficult to make anything out. Sukhwant Singh gives no units from either side. Apparently, one battalion of the reinforcing 33rd Brigade was at Krishna Ghati but no history tells where this place is and searching on Google Earth, Mapcarta, and Indian maps on the web fails to enlighten us. I can guess from one narrative that Krishna Ghati is to the east of Banawat and west of Jarni Wali Ghati. But neither of the ghatis is to be found. This makes any intelligent evaluation of the battle difficult; in turn, no insightful critique of use to later generations can be made. A ghat is stairs leading to the river bank for bathing and washing laundry; the word also means a mountain pass. In this case it likely means a pass that leads to the river.

19 Colonel Lalit Chamola, '*The Story of the Lady who saved Poonch in 1971 War*', Facebook-post, 31 March 2021

20 Names of Padma Awardees of Jammu and Kashmir State (https://jkgad.nic.in/pdf/Award1.pdf)

21 December Weather Forecast: Poonch, India, Weather-Atlas.com, extracted in November 2022.

22 The reasons are unknown to the author.

23 Major-General Sukhwant Singh, '*1971 War: Battle of Daruchian*', Indiandefencereview.com, 12 December 2017.

24 Gill. J., *An Atlas of the 1971 India-Pakistan War: The Creation of Bangladesh* (Washington, National Defense University, 2003)

25 Unless stated otherwise, the following reconstruction is largely based on Singh, *A Soldier's Account of the Heroic Battle of Daruchhian* (the author is

son of Major Hamir Singh, who was gravely wounded while serving as a prisoner of war).

26 Note the Pakistanis ran into similar problems in their Punch attacks: one of the two deep penetration thrusts was blocked; the successful penetration was counter-attacked by India and pinched off.

27 While I do not mean to scoff at the OC, because soldiers have their superstitions, elementary common sense says if a person is overcome by a superstition, he has lost half the battle. My birthday is not just 13 December, but also a Friday; I consider such years to be lucky ones – perhaps self-servingly!

28 A subedar is a junior commissioned officer rank.

29 Official History, p.325. It will be noted the official history gives Pakistan only one company defending

30 Official History, p.349, Footnote 150.

31 A great mystery of the Indian casualty reporting system is that the missing are listed as missing forever. If a man does not turn up within a certain time should he not be listed as Missing Presumed Dead? The way India does this count leaves the army open to the suspicion that it is understating its dead.

32 This is another issue where we outsiders cannot pass judgement.

33 A sad footnote is given by MG Vijay Singh. His badly wounded father, commanding C Company, was taken POW by the Mujahids, who began shooting the prisoners. One was an artillery observer captain; another was a rifleman. One Grenadier called out: why are you killing us? We too are Muslims. The Mujahids stopped, and even ignored a Sikh artillery technical assistant. This is a side of war seldom discussed in all the stories about the glories of war. POW executions were conducted by both sides. In one case Indian troops captured several Pakistani Special Service Group commandos. The Indian commander had no POW facilities and could not just let enemy troops behind his lines go. He ordered them executed; decades later he was still haunted by what he had done. In its turn, at Chhamb Pakistan SSG commandos needlessly killed non-combatants and truck drivers of 9th Horse that had the misfortune to be captured.Even the US's hands are not clean, for example, the May 1945 execution by 157th Infantry Regiment of several SS guards after the liberation of the Dachau concentration camp. To its credit, the US Army began a criminal investigation, but was stopped by General George Patton. Several massacres were committed by Patton's troops. The classic narrative by Lazadlas Farago a mammoth 896+ page beautifully written page turner, is careful to cite those incidents as were instigated by only the Germans for e.g., when the Germans pretend to surrender only to fire upon the Americans. Many Waffen SS officers (actual or suspected) were shot on sight. British troops murdered surrendering German troops in hot blood. It is reasonable to assume the same was true of the Americans. For the Germans and the Red Army, killing of surrendered prisoners was so routine as to be of no significance which each side outbidding the other in barbaric cruelty

34 Official History, pp.72–73.

Chapter 4

1 Interview with Umakant Dube (as of 1965, he was a young officer leading his battalion across the bridge).

2 Civilians think in the military an order is sacrosanct and everyone jumps to it, in reality, plain-speaking subordinate officers do argue back.

3 Originally raised in 1790 and the third oldest Indian cavalry regiment.

4 The 72nd was the youngest regiment in the cavalry, having been raised just six months previously and reinforced after the outbreak of war.

5 Based on interview with Major-General A. J. S. Sandhu, 20 January 2022 (Sandhu is the author of the definitive book on the Chhamb Sector, written with full access to the official records).

6 There is a story behind this tape. I had to go to the AIR Archives on Parliament Street several times in search of it. Initially I have been told (confidentially) that there was no such tape listed with them. When I persisted that as a young Captain I had heard this broadcast in January 1972, they promised to look again. But once again I got a negative answer and gave up. But God was kind, one day out of the blue I got a letter that it had been located and that I was welcome to come and listen to it. So I went there, and was ushered into a cubicle meant for this purpose and listened to it twice over. They explicitly banned its recording though I wonder why!!

7 It is a pity no thought was given to equipping, training and employing them to better effect especially as their standard ORBAT was based around six rifle companies and 191st Brigade could have used every additional help.

8 We will have to ignore the inherent unworkability of one commander controlling an Area of Responsibility stretching from Demchok in southeast Askai Chin through the Karakoram Pass, Kargil, Northern Gullies, Tithwal, Uri, Punch, Rajouri, Hill, Chaamb, Chicken Neck, Jammu, Samba, Pathankot, Gurdaspur, Amritsar, Ferozepore, Fazilka and Sri Ganga Nager sectors – to say nothing of the armour strike reserve to be used for the decisive battle. These are geographically separate examples of incomplete thinking of the part of Indian AHQ. The Pakistan GHQ, of course, did no thinking at all. The Jammu and Kashmir sectors alone ran to about 750km, the length of the entire Inner German Border! Today three separate armies cover the same AOR (Northern, Western, and South Western Commands).

9 If Pakistan had sent 111th Brigade with four battalions to Punch instead of Chhamb, it could have overrun Punch. None of these things are easily done in the mountains, the logistics are very difficult, but with adequate preparation, Pakistan could have supported a larger force. If Pakistan had sent 111th Brigade with four battalions to Punch instead of Chhamb, it could have overrun Punch. None of these things are easily done in the mountains, the logistics are very difficult, but with adequate preparation, Pakistan could have supported a larger force

10 A minor clarification: 9-ton does not mean the road can carry vehicles with 9-ton payloads. The vehicle, plus a trailer, plus the payload must not exceed 9-tons and must be in perfect condition. The weakest bridge or the worst stage of the road determines the load classification. In the hills and mountains, curves play a part. One day a road might be 9-tons, but heavy rains can break sections of the road, so the overall load classification is less. Real world conditions dictate a 9-ton road may be able to carry a vehicle with a 3-ton payload. Now, of course, we do not have a stern inspector standing at the start of a road who carefully measures vehicle weight and payload, nor does he have the means to check every kilometre of road conditions. So trucks carry what they must. Sometimes it works. Sometimes it does not, and results in crashed and overturned vehicles with stripped gears littering the road. Is there no solution? Of course, there is. You deploy road construction engineers. With India, and the same applies to Pakistan, the problem is there is so much emphasis on teeth, ie., the fighting arms, that other arms must go short.

Notably, in the Second World War, the US had about 55 divisions deployed in Europe. By the end of 1944, the US Army had 240 non-divisional engineer battalions, or four per division. Had the US followed the Soviet practice of focusing on the 'front end', i.e. combat, that would be worth a total of some 15 divisions.

11 The 51st BSF Battalion was deployed to Akhnoor, to defend the 10th Division's maintenance area. The small number of air defence guns was caused by the shortage of such weapons. Fortunately for India, Pakistan Air Force lacked numbers to pose a threat.

12 While GHQ's more limited orders were well-known at the time, those requiring a reference can consult John Gill's Note 105, where he cites the Hamoodur Rehman Commission inquiry after the war. It would be interesting to know where Gill, a US Army officer, saw the report because 11 of the 12 copies were destroyed, and the twelfth was suppressed. When people refer to the published report, that is a supplement completed after Pakistan POW's reached home and declassified by the Government of Pakistan in 2002.

13 This evidences Pakistan's dire need for equipment. After the war, captured Indian tanks were given to partially replace losses.

14 Achutan, p.39

15 Forward Poise is a term used by the Indian Army to signify a defensive deployment but ready to quickly shift to the offensive.

16 Sandhu, p. 104

17 Purely as a speculation, Pakistan may have been hindered by replacing the reconnaissance troop of six light tanks in an armoured regiment with six recoilless rifle-armed jeeps because of a severe shortage of tanks. In no manner can jeeps equipped with recoilless rifles replace light tanks (M24s in this case). Hamid says that the light tanks were replaced with jeeps to lighten up the bulky Pakistan tank regiment. This looks like a rationalisation for the tank shortage. Certainly the 41-tank regiment was easier to handle, but no one suggested that replacing light tanks with jeeps made anything easier.

18 Unless stated otherwise, based on Veekay, *The Indo-Pak War 1971*, Chapter 7.

19 So how is this mystery to be resolved? Remember, this was well before Unmanned Aerial Vehicles. My guess – and it is solely a guess – is that Pakistani counterbattery detection was much better than India had earlier

assumed: though if the Indian guns remained silent, how were they nonetheless detected?

20 And that in itself made it a unique attack: in author’s opinion, even the Germans, who were the experts in hasty counterattacks with whatever troops could be immediately gathered, would be satisfied.

Chapter 5

1 ‘Off records’, some of the Assamese had indeed bolted, but that was only a human repsonse considering the ferocity of the attack. The same is valid for a few troops of the 9th Jat and 7th Kumanon, who did break rank. In total, however, this was a tiny issue.

2 In Vietnam, one out of 10 soldiers was a signalman, giving such a dense net with instant connection to all units that US combat units may actually have been hampered. A story told to me by an officer in the war is that he was part of a 4-man crew on a mission that was under a 30-year classification. The men, as is the way with soldiers, were using a lot of swear words when suddenly a crisp voice cut in and barked at them to clean up their language because the White House was listening.

3 A humorous incident took place when the uncles of a soldier with 10th Division set out from Gurdaspur, evaded every military police check post and arrived 70km west at Chhamb uninterrupted. They would not be placated until they saw their nephew, assured themselves he was being well treated, engaged in wild folk dancing with the unit CO, and left for home. From Lieutenant General Baljeet Singh, ‘Memories of another Day’, Indiandefencereview.com, 4 May 2022.

Chapter 6

1 Designation ‘Light’ for the 8th Light Cavalry was a honorific title from earlier days: both the 7th and the 8th Light Cavalry were medium tank regiments.

2 Is this a fair criticism? After all, armour is flexible. If the Brigade was dispersed in a defensive role, surely it could have been easily reassembled for the strike into Pakistan? But only if adequate time was provided. Moreover, two tank regiments of the Brigade were on the right side – i.e. the wrong side – of the Chenab River, requiring five days to ferry across into the 10th Division sector.

Chapter 7

1 To be fair, Major-General Gurcharan Singh Sandhu (1971 GOC 1 Armoured Division) ‘carpet-bombed’ the leadership of Indian I Corps in 1999 so thoroughly that India’s military reputation was finely shredded. K. C. Praval, a former Indian Army officer, was more restrained but nonetheless severely critical. Sukhwant Singh was initially caught between speaking the truth and defending his friend the GOC of Indian I Corps, but he too became critical. On his side, in 2000, as shall be seen, Amin ruthlessly dropped several ‘Mother of All Bombs’ on Pakistan’s I Corps leadership which must by then have been already vaporised by his criticism. Some of this is noted in this book.

2 Official History, p.363

3 Official History, p.277

4 There is an amusing story about I Corps. It was raised as an HQ just before the 1965 War. The General Officer Commanding had retired a few weeks earlier and was recalled. When he took over the corps, he could not find his orders. After much searching, he located them in his jacket pocket. I will not comment further except to say the Indian Army at that time had many duffers, however charming their idiosyncrasies. Another story told to me around 1970, is that V Corps was the original number however this information was leaked to Pakistan and so I Corps was chosen. This is an odd story if true because I Corps would also leaked out from the cantonment teashops within days.

5 The 36th Division’s 33rd Brigade was re-deployed to Punch, on 25 November 1971, while its 323rd Brigade was sent to the X Sector, thus leaving it with only a single brigade.

6 I suspect this decision was taken to help defend against the Phase 2 offensive of Indian Corps planned for 17–18 December, which did not take place, because of the ceasefire of December 17. This became unnecessary as Indian Corps was moving slowly and the war ended before the Phase 2 offensive, after the capture of Shakargarh was to begin.

7 Official History, pp.355–356 and Muirshed Ahmad Khan, ‘Gen Irshad denies giving up villages’, Pakindiawars.wordpress.com, 25 February 2014.

8 Candeth, p.105.

9 The 14th Brigade of the Pakistan army wore the honorific title ‘Parachute’, because before the Partition of 1947, it was a part of the 2nd Indian Parachute Division (disbanded shortly thereafter). However, none of its battalion was airborne.

10 Amin, p.23, quoting Nisr from an article he wrote for the Pakistani Army magazine *Sabre and Lance*.

11 Unless stated otherwise, the following three sub-chapters are based on Amir Qureshi, ‘Battle of Shakargarh’, idoc.pub, November 2019; Official History; Veekay, *The Indo-Pak War 1971*, Chapter 7; Bhaskar Sarkar.

12 The M36B2 used the Sherman chassis with the M-10 hull and mounted a powerful gun with 47 rounds 90mm gun. Doubtless quite useful against Indian AMX-13s and PT-76, it could have been useful against Indian medium tanks if it had been deployed like the famed German Sturmgeschütz III (StuG III), in the defensive and from cover.

13 Based on Bhupinder Singh, Role of Tanks in 1965 War (Patiala, BC Publishers, 1982) – an informed and detailed book, a true ‘must read’ for students of the 1965 Indo-Pakistani War.

14 Unless stated otherwise, based on Colonel Bhaskar Sarkar, ‘Battle of Basantar 1971 War’.

15 Sukwant Singh, p.272.

16 Unless stated otherwise, based on Colonel Bhaskar Sarkar, ‘Battle of Basantar 1971 War’.

17 Unless stated otherwise, based on Major A. H. Amin.

18 Delhra is sometime spelled as Dehlra.

19 Notably, while Bhaskar Sarhar has the 31st as attacking first, this is not supported by any other Pakistani accounts. Actually, initial Pakistani deployment included the A Squadron of the 13th Lancers, only. On orders from the HQ 8th Independent Armoured Brigade, its task was to contain the Indian incursion in the Barapind-Jarpal area and meanwhile move on Gazipur. The 31st Cavalry was then deployed in the middle, with B and C Squadrons of 13th Lancers opposite to Barapind-Jarpal.

20 Thanks to Bobby Grewal and Janakrj Vatsu for their comments. Major Amin generously accepted this criticism, though without comment.

21 Unless stated otherwise, based on Major A. H. Amin.

22 Brigadier G. D. Bakshi, *Operational Art in the Indian Context: an Open-Source-Analysis* (New Delhi: Institute for Defence Studies and Analysis, 2001).

Chapter 8

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Appendix I

1 Based on correspondence with Ajaj Shukla, one of the top Indian defence analysts. He was commissioned in 4th (Hodson’s) Horse in 1979 and served till 2000, ending as OC Hodson’s before leaving the Army, As he came into the regiment when it had Vijayantas, then T-72s, his reminiscence of the Centurion is based on what regiment ‘old timers’ told him.

2 Amin, p.22.

3 This is the total number of armoured regiments without independent squadrons and Tank Delivery Units (TDU). The TDUs were nothing more than armoured delivery units but Pakistan, with its penchant to take risks, sometimes used TDUs as tank regiments.

Bibliography

1 Syed Ali Hamid, p.84–88; Siddiqi, ‘East Pakistan’, pp.240–241 and 247–249.

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Ravi Rikhye studied international military affairs for 10-years before writing his first paper. Over the last 60 years he has authored and co-authored over 30 books, many of these for the Government of India (though many remain unpublished). He is currently completing his seventh master's degree (in Intelligence Management), and hoping to undertake his first doctorate. This is his second instalment for Helion's Asia@War series.